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Ramaswamy et al.

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(54) **METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR
MONITORING THE INSERTION OF LOCAL
MEDIA CONTENT INTO A PROGRAM
STREAM**

USPC **725/19**; 725/22; 725/32
(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 725/9–21, 22, 32, 34–36, 33
See application file for complete search history.

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patent is extended or adjusted under 35
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(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04H 60/32 (2008.01)
H04H 20/14 (2008.01)

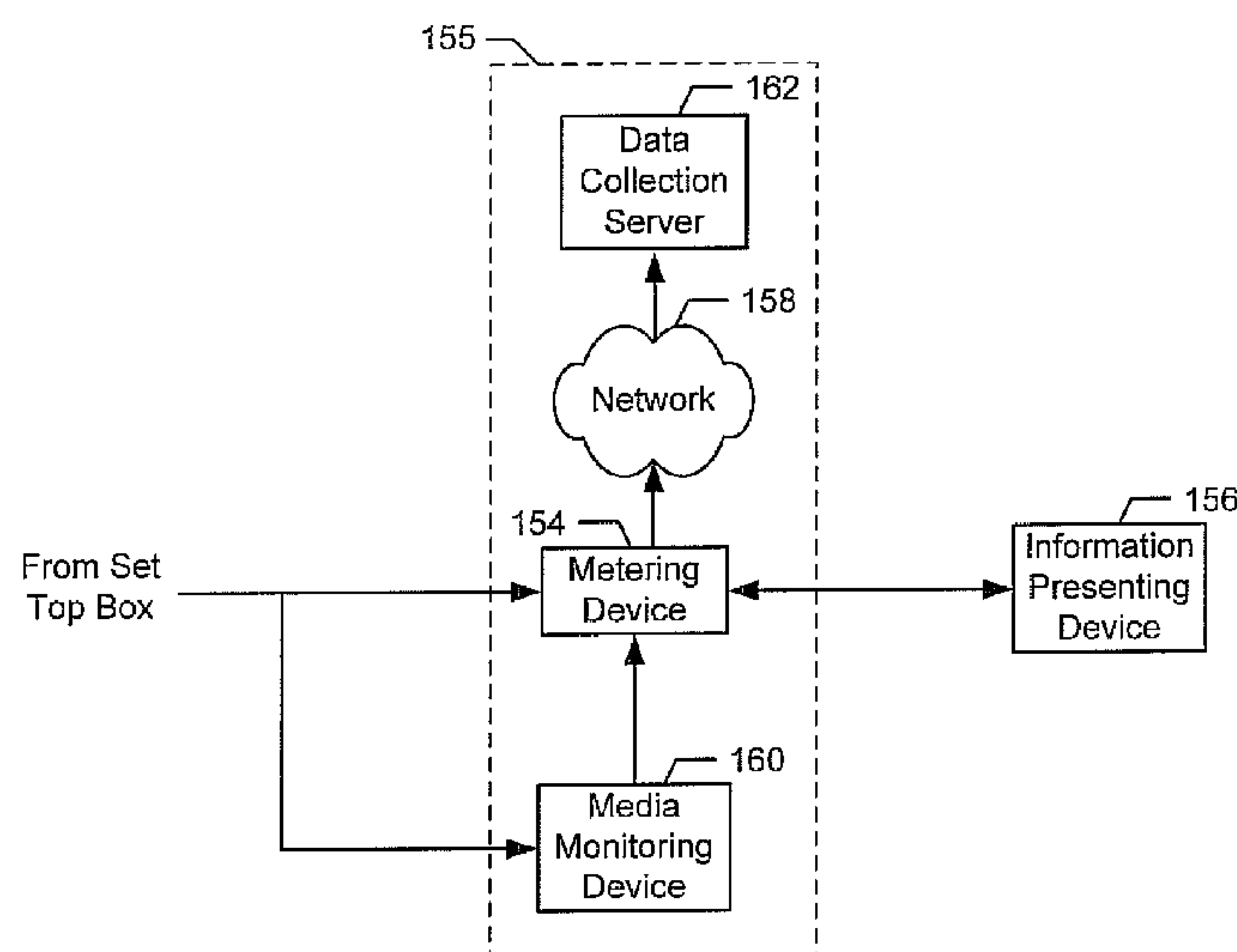
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Methods and apparatus for monitoring locally inserted media
content are disclosed. A disclosed method includes obtaining
identification data and inserting the identification data in the
media content after the media content has been received at a
media consumption location. Another disclosed method
includes receiving media content before the media content is
output by a consumer receiving device and monitoring the
received media content. Monitoring the received media con-
tent may include extracting signatures from the received
media content and transmitting the extracted signatures to
another location.

(Continued)

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35 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets



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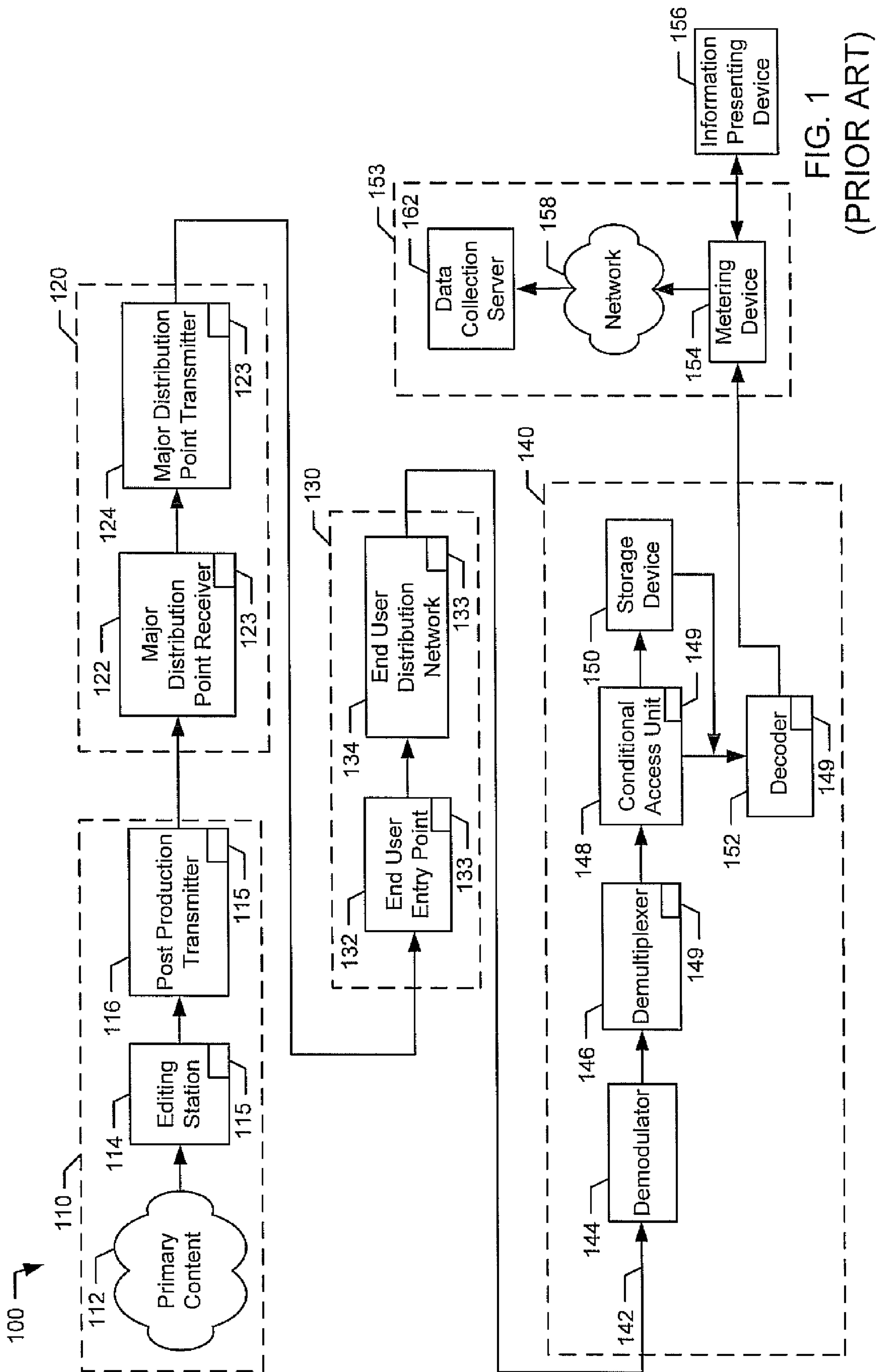


FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

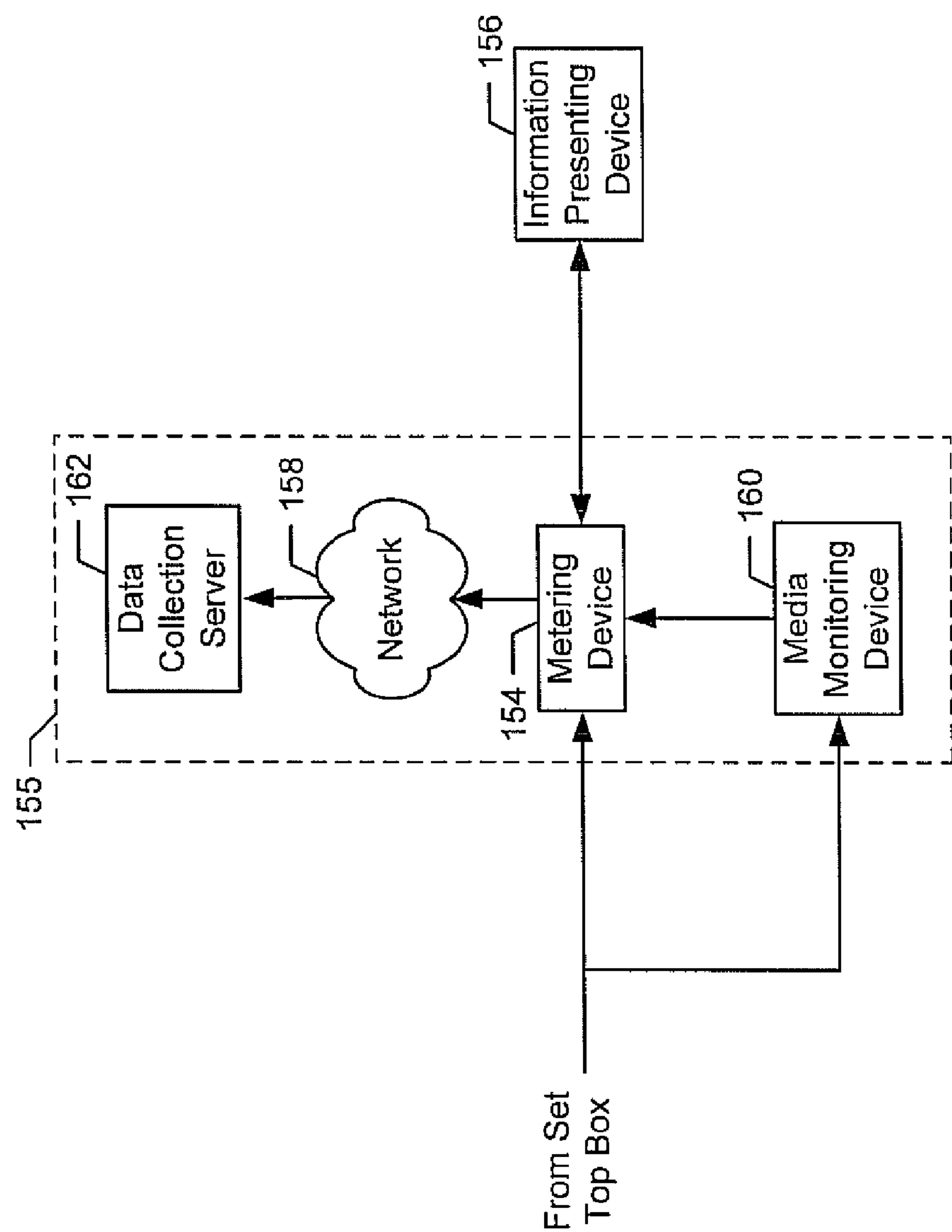


FIG. 1A

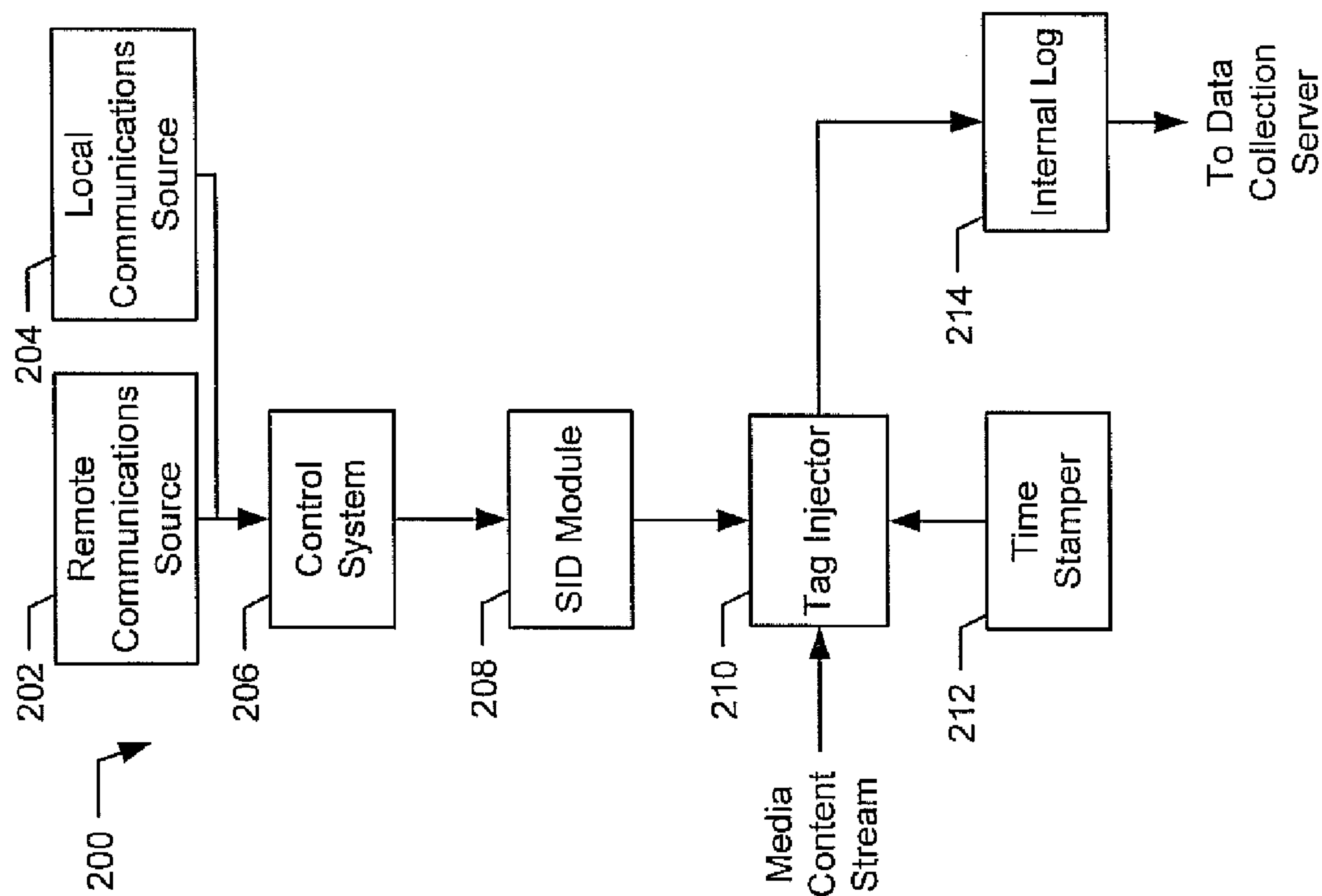


FIG. 2

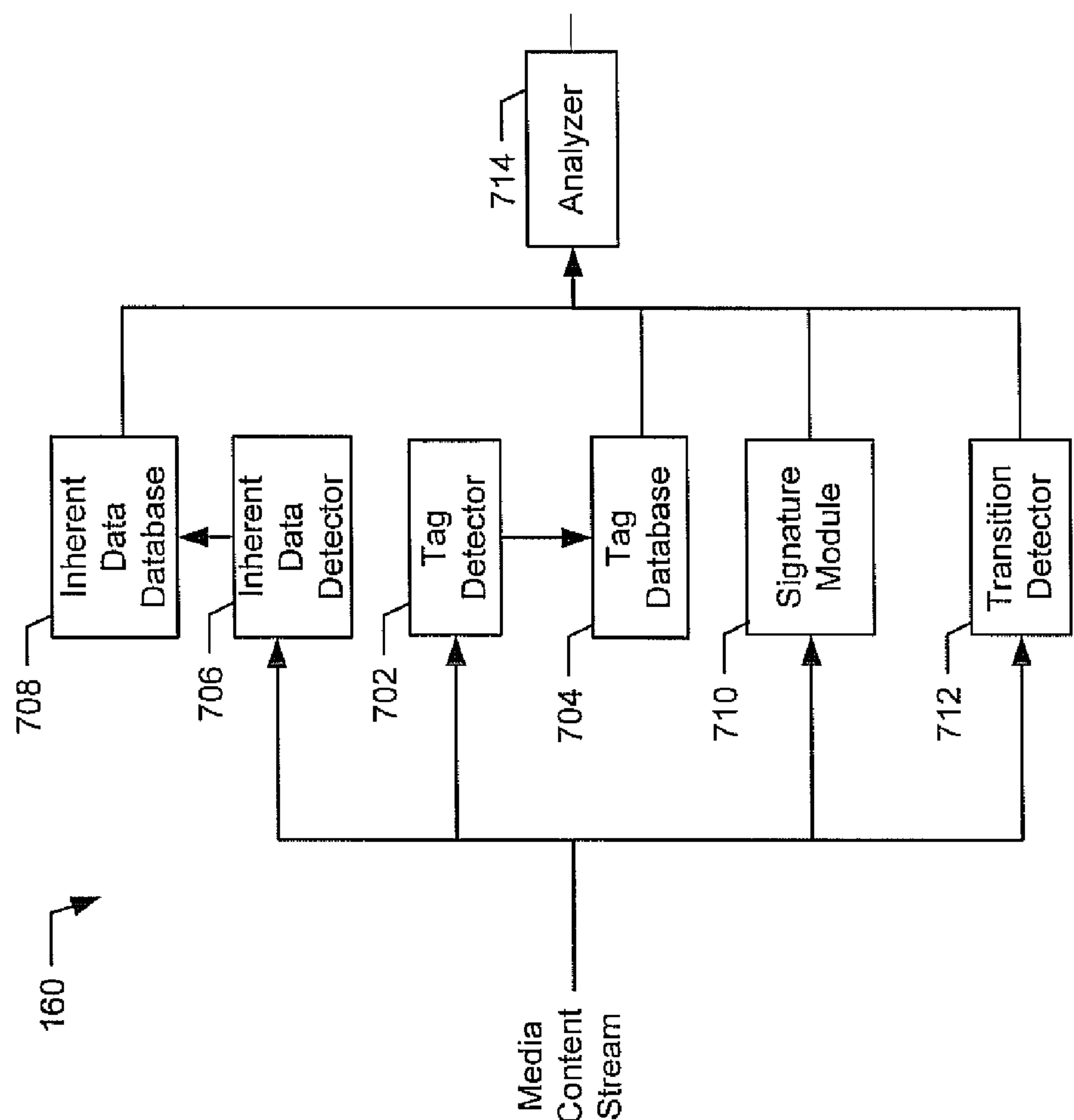


FIG. 7

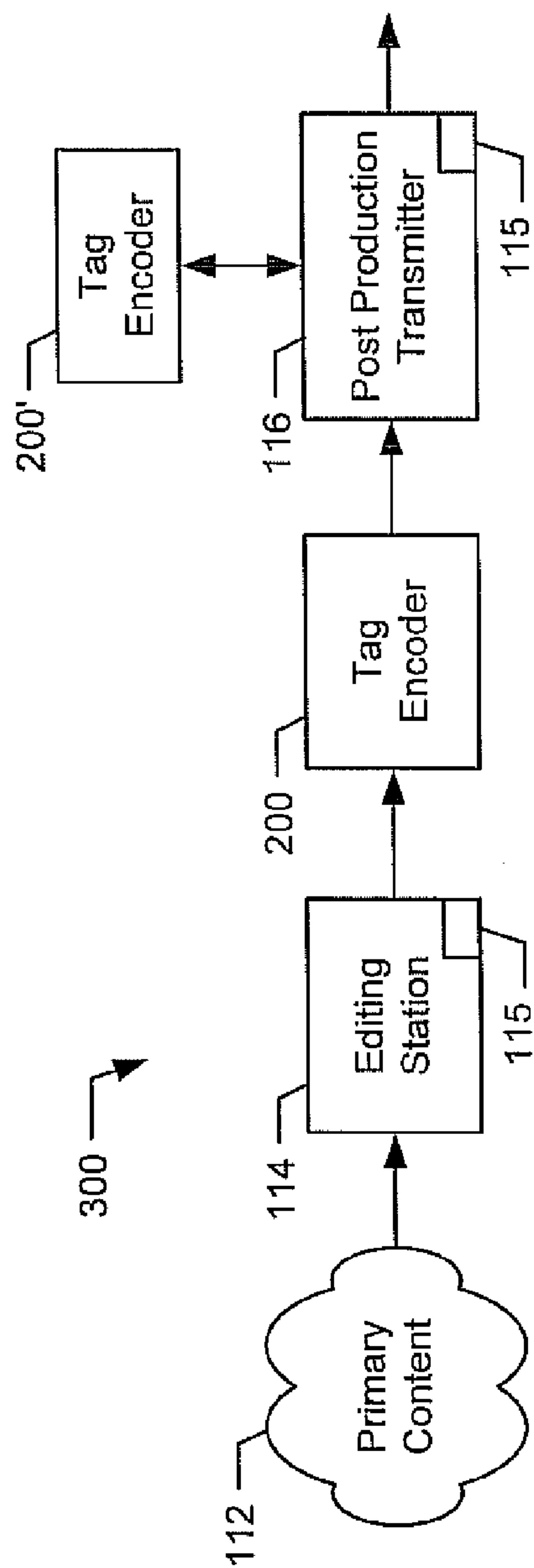


FIG. 3

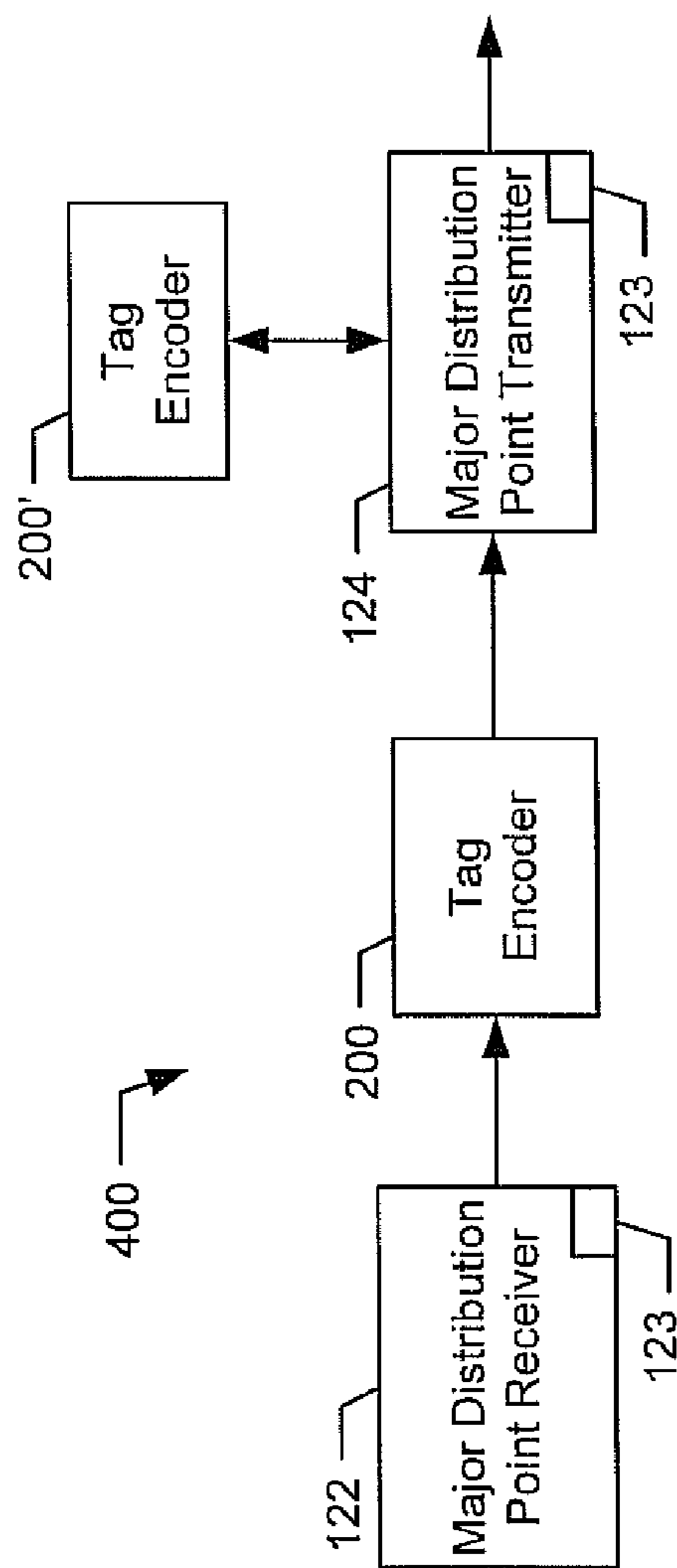


FIG. 4

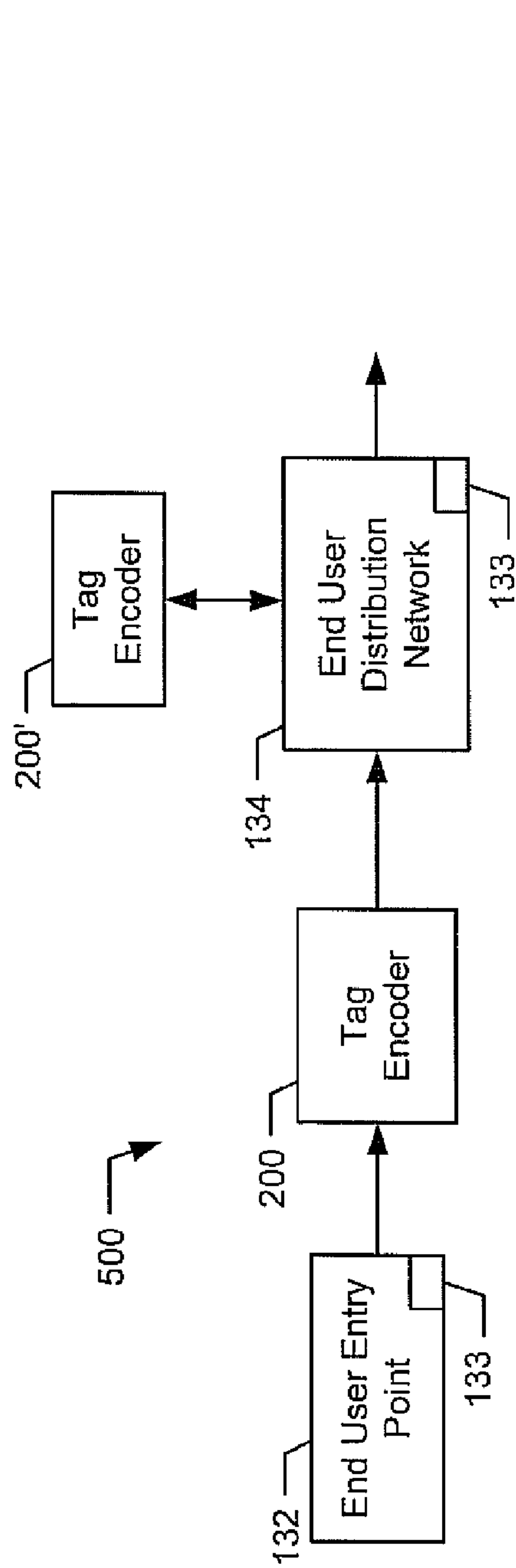


FIG. 5

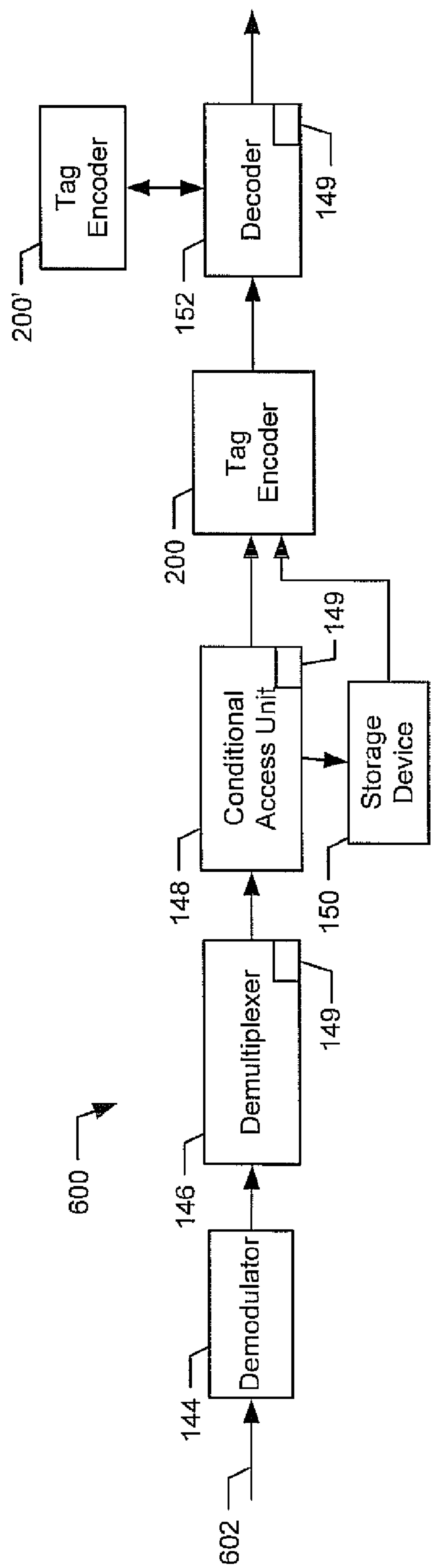


FIG. 6

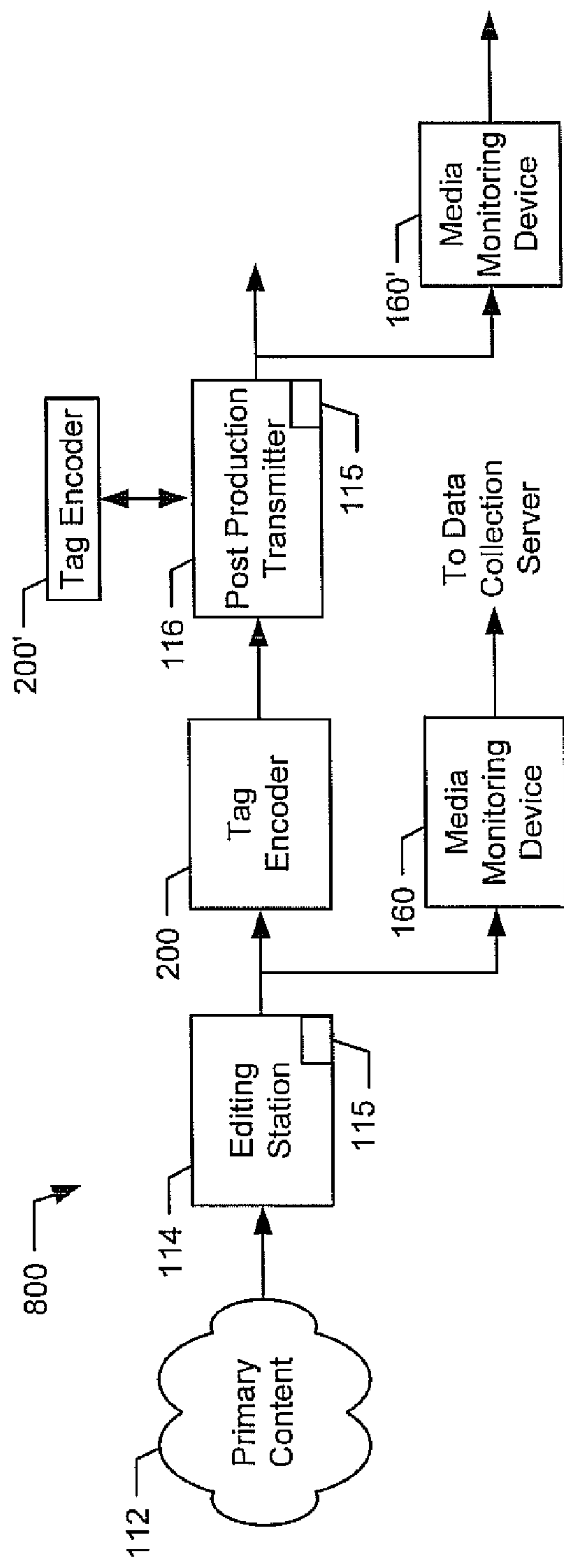


FIG. 8

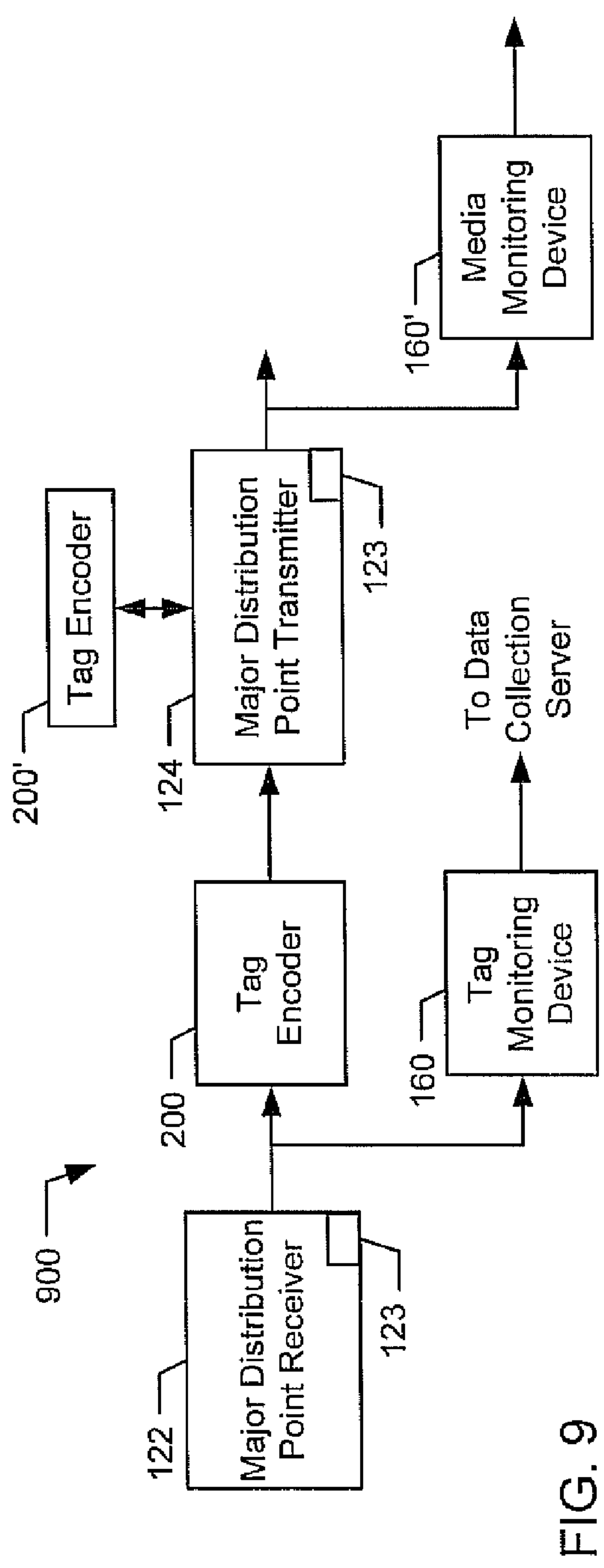


FIG. 9

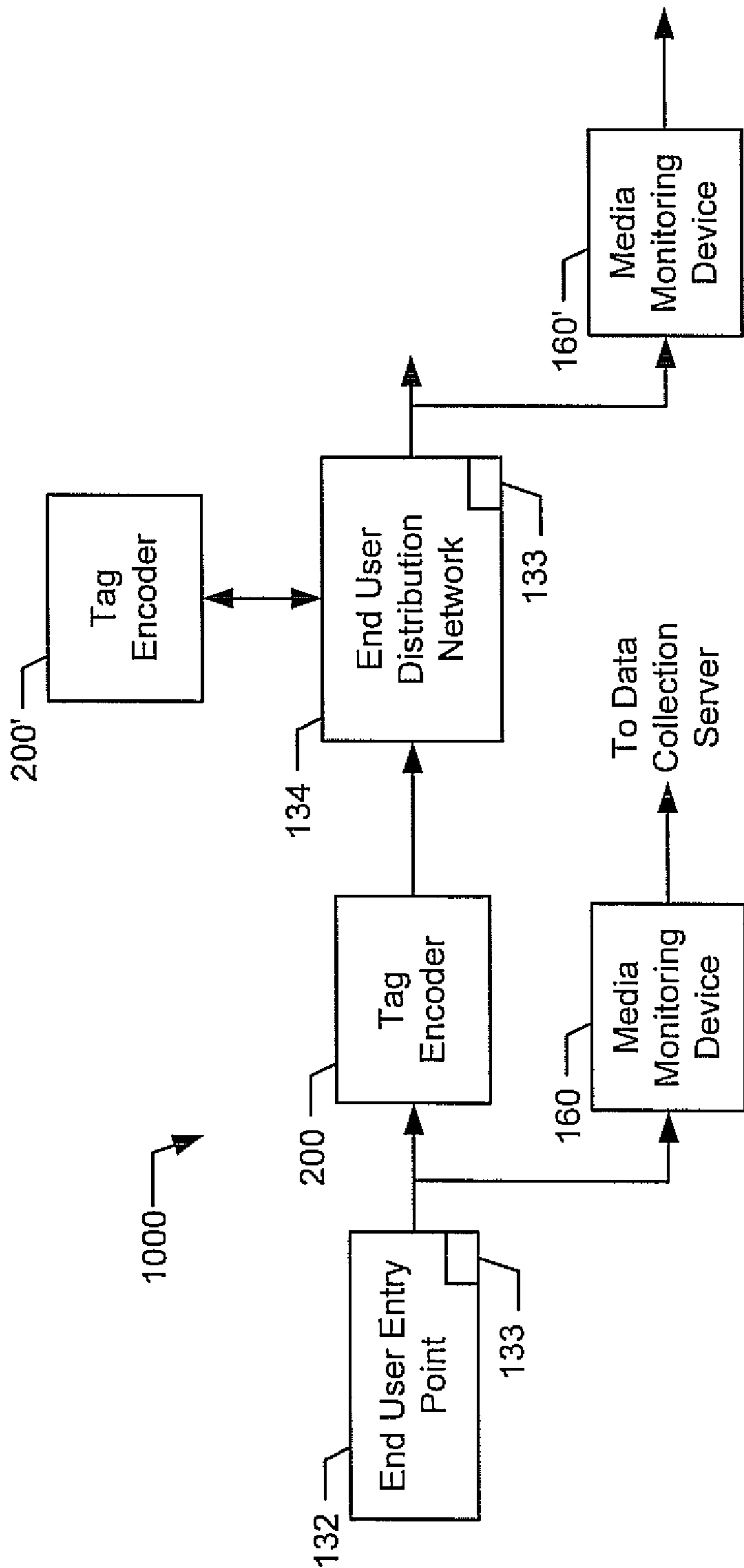


FIG. 10

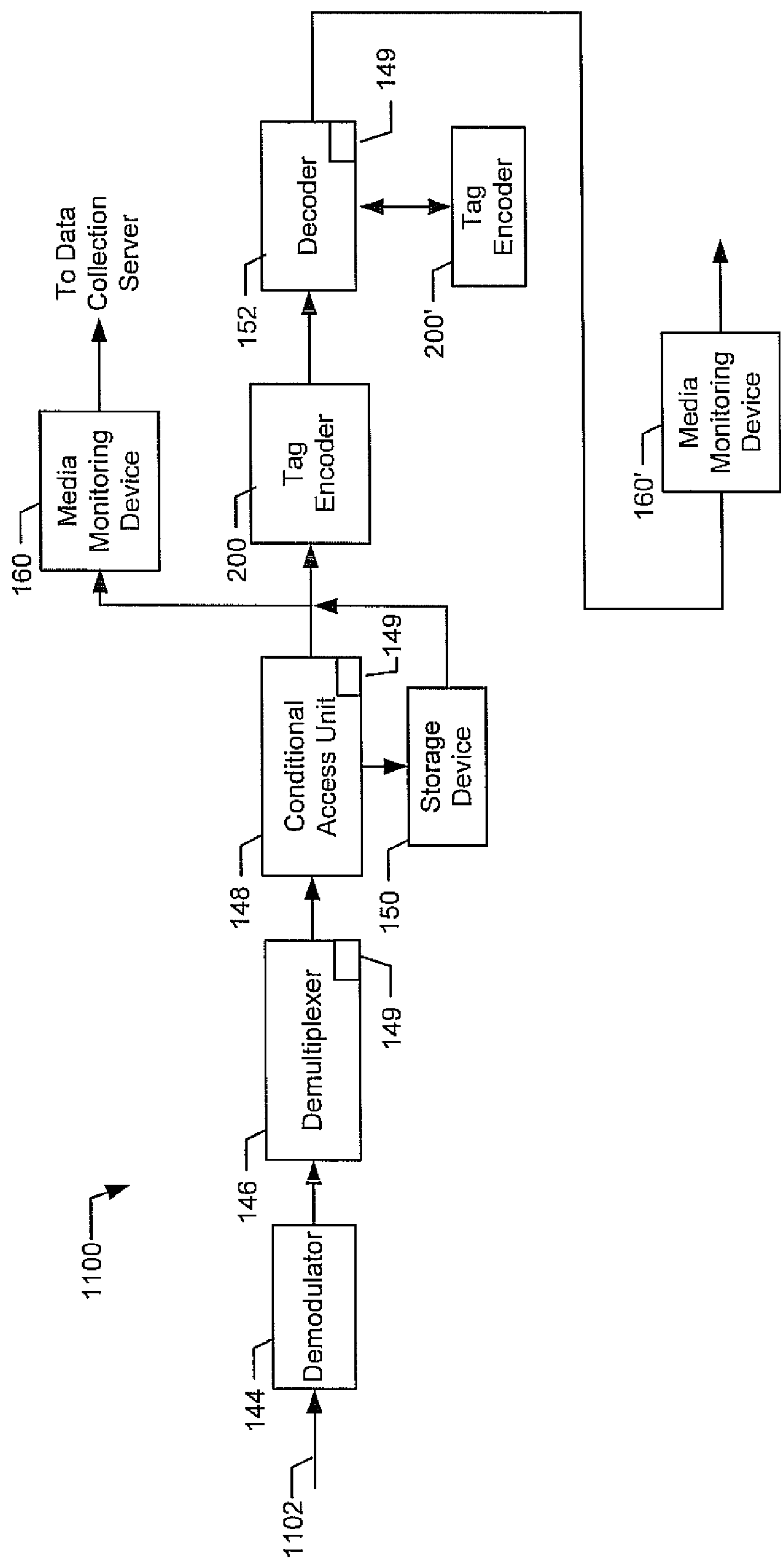


FIG. 11

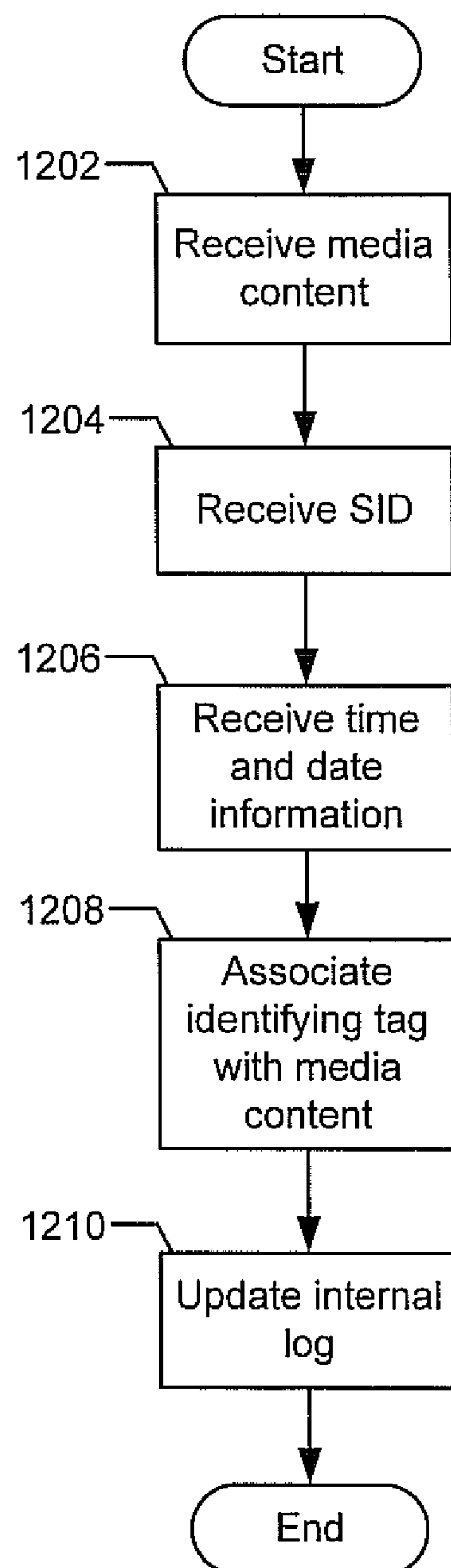


FIG. 12

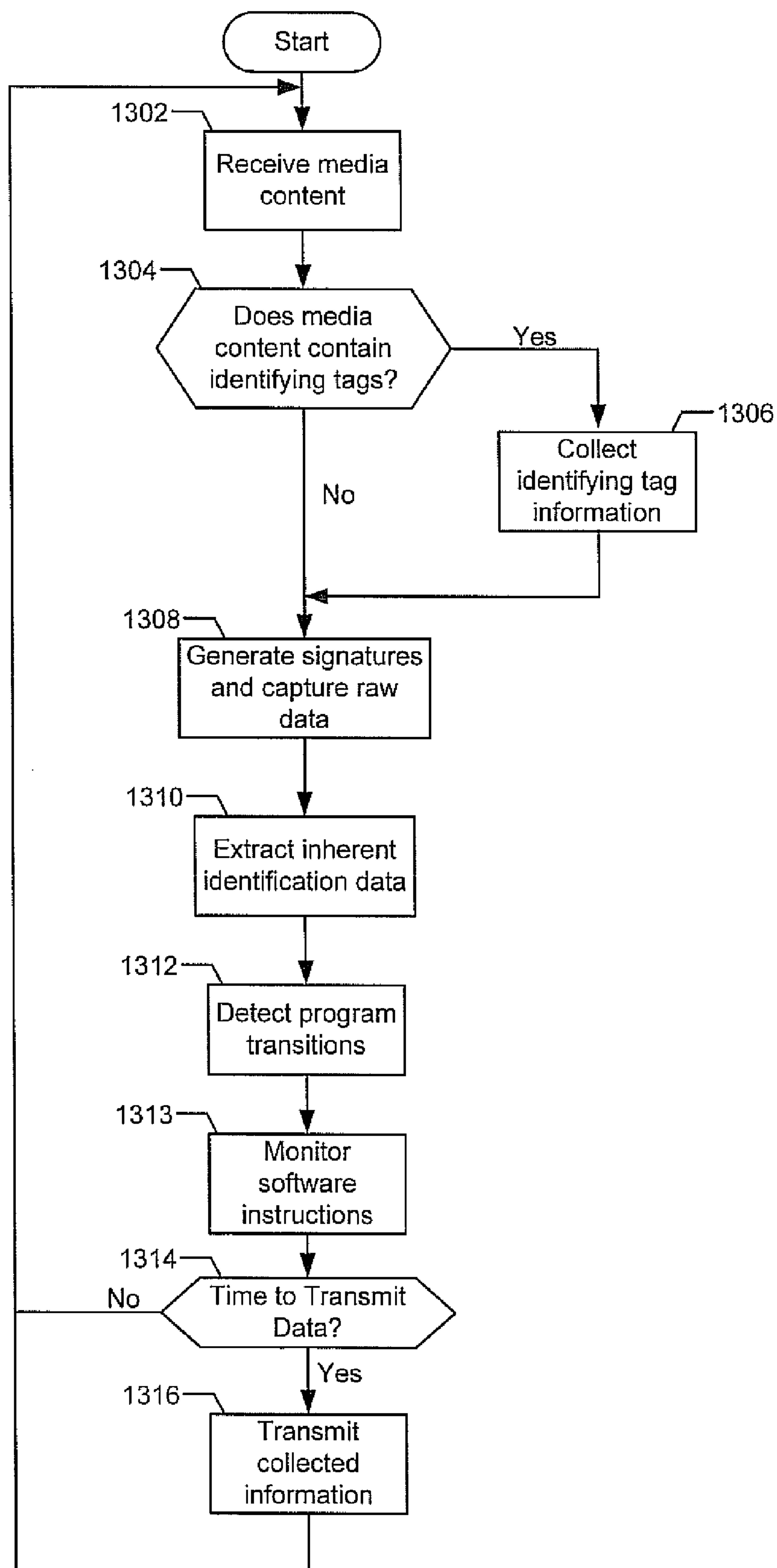


FIG. 13

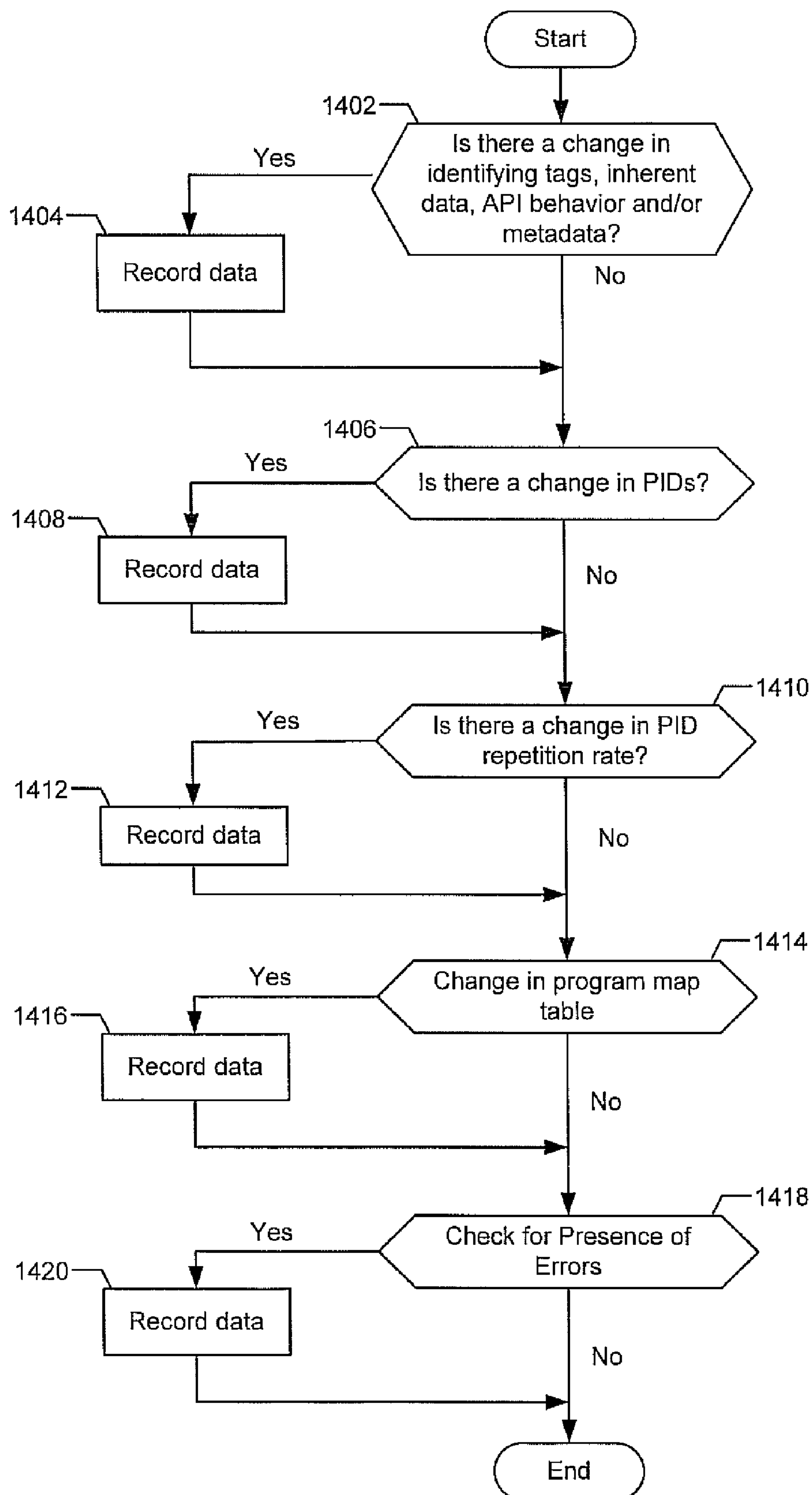


FIG. 14

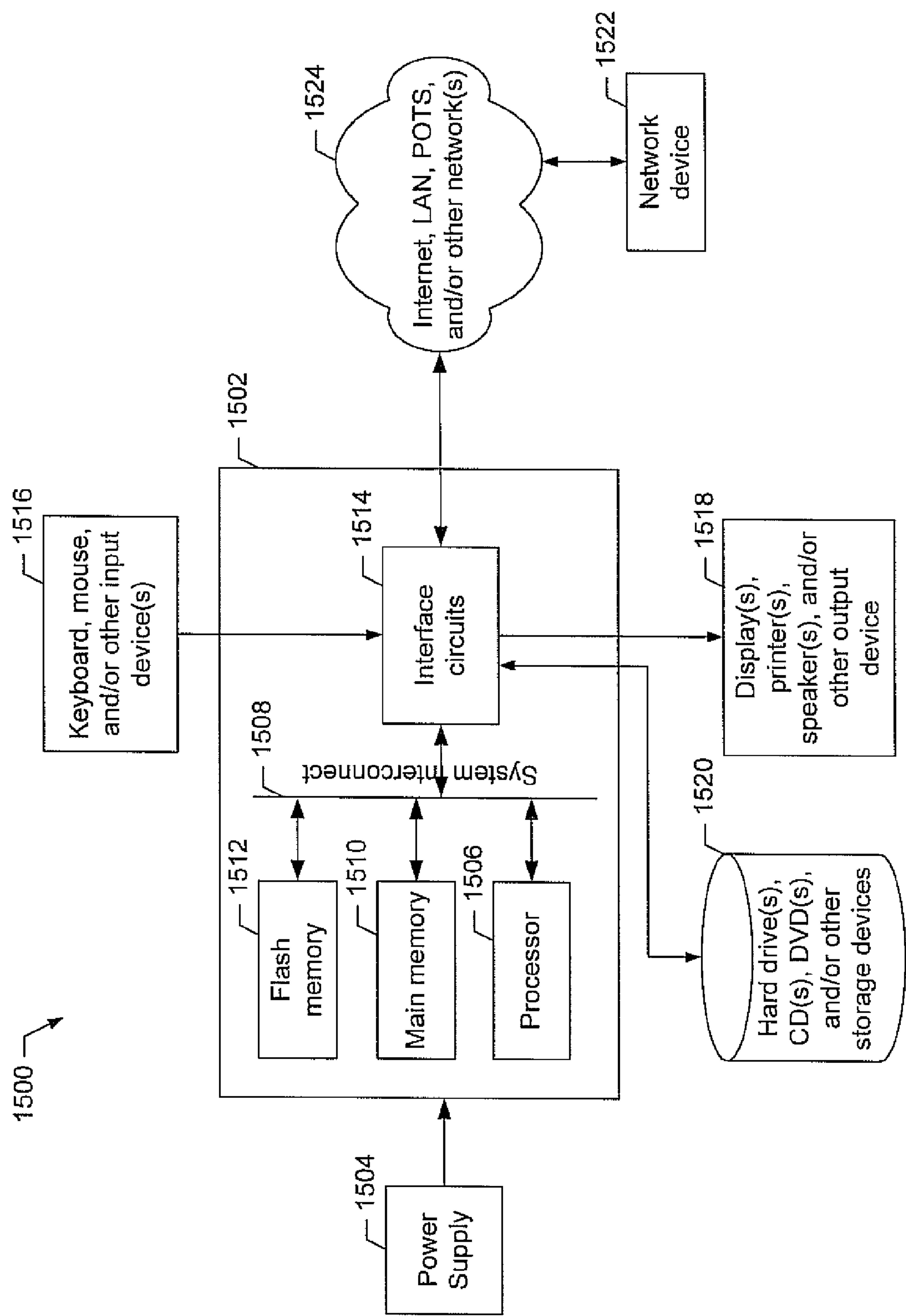


FIG. 15

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METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR MONITORING THE INSERTION OF LOCAL MEDIA CONTENT INTO A PROGRAM STREAM

This application is a continuation of PCT Patent Application Serial No. PCT/US2005/026426, filed on Jul. 25, 2005, which claims priority from U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 60/590,626 filed Jul. 23, 2004, which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure pertains to audience measurement and, more particularly, to methods and apparatus for monitoring broadcast content including locally inserted media content.

BACKGROUND

The Society of Cable and Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE) is creating standards to define a method for seamlessly splicing different segments of digital content into a stream of digital data such as a broadcast program stream (e.g., a Digital Program Insertion standard (DPI)). These standards may enable a media provider (e.g., a television, radio, or Internet provider) to personalize and/or customize programming according to a consumer's tastes and preferences based on demographic data and the consumer's choices. For example, a digital bit stream containing television data may be received at a set top box (STB) or other receiving device at an end user's location and may contain digital indicators and/or cues to indicate a splicing point (e.g., a point in the program where digital content may be spliced). The STB may analyze the viewer's interests and/or demographic data and splice into the digital bit stream an appropriate advertisement and/or some other programming (e.g., special interest shows and/or informative messages) previously stored in the STB or received by the STB via a second digital bit stream. In other examples, the locally inserted content is not tied to the preferences of a particular end user, but is instead inserted for universal broadcast, for broadcast in a limited geographical area, etc.

This potential splicing activity presents a special challenge to audience measurement. (As used herein, audience measurement includes audience size and/or demographic measurement, content verification, commercial verification, program lineup verification, and content tracking for any type of media (e.g., television (digital, analog, cable, VOD, and/or satellite), radio, Internet, etc.)). Traditional content identification methods may not be sufficient to monitor such splicing activities. For example, a traditional method for television audience measurement monitors a television tuning status for channel identification and uses verified "as-run" logs (e.g., lists of television programs correlated with the television channels on which the television programs were broadcast and the times at which the television programs were broadcast) from networks and/or other programming sources to determine the identity of the television programming viewed. This method assumes that the viewed media content has not been altered, either before or during distribution because, if such alterations were to occur, the program logs may no longer accurately reflect the actual content that was received, displayed and viewed at a home.

More specifically, the use of splicing as defined in standards such as the DPI standard may allow television programming to be customized at a cable head-end, at the end user's

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location, or elsewhere in the distribution chain. As a result of such customization, the "as-run" logs may become inaccurate. Specifically, because the "as-run" logs are not designed to reflect the customization provided by local program insertion, the "as-run" logs may not accurately correlate program data and/or channel/time cross references and, thus, the "as-run" logs cannot be relied upon to accurately identify the media content consumed at an end user's location.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an example system to produce, transmit, receive, and view media content monitored by an example audience measurement system.

FIG. 1A is a block diagram of the example system of FIG. 1, additionally including a device to monitor tags that have been inserted into the media content.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an example tag encoder to inject identifying data into media content.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an example post production site implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of an example major media distribution system implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of an example end user media distribution system implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2.

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of an example set top box implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an example media monitoring device to detect identifying data and log content identification data.

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of an example post production site implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7.

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of an example major media distribution system implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7.

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of an example end user media distribution system implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7.

FIG. 11 is a block diagram of an example set top box implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7.

FIG. 12 is a flowchart representative of example machine readable instructions which may be executed to implement the system of FIG. 2.

FIG. 13 is a flowchart representative of example machine readable instructions which may be executed to implement the system of FIG. 7.

FIG. 14 is a flowchart representative of example machine readable instructions which may be executed to implement an example process to detect transitions.

FIG. 15 is a block diagram of an example computer system that may execute the instructions represented by FIGS. 12, 13, and/or 14 to implement the apparatus of FIG. 2 and/or FIG. 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following, content that originates at the very start of the media distribution system will be referred to as "primary content." Media added (i.e., inserted, appended, etc.) to primary content anywhere along the media distribution chain will be referred to as "locally inserted content."

In general, the disclosed audience measurement system 155 of FIG. 1A is adapted to monitor locally inserted media content presented on an information presenting device 156 and to monitor primary content in which local media content

may be inserted. In other words, the disclosed methods and systems identify content (e.g., a television program, a radio program, etc.) presented by a monitored information presenting device **156** (e.g., a television, a radio, a stereo, a computer, etc.), whether the content is locally inserted anywhere along the media distribution chain or originated at the head-end of the media distribution chain. In addition to collecting data reflecting the identity of the content (primary and/or locally inserted) presented by an information presenting device **156**, the disclosed methods and systems may also gather audience identification data to enable the creation of ratings information.

Before describing modifications employed to enable monitoring and identification of locally inserted content, the following describes a known media content distribution system **100** which may be monitored by a conventional audience measurement system **153**.

FIG. **1** is a block diagram of a known media distribution system **100** that is configured to produce, distribute, and present media content. The example system **100** of FIG. **1** includes a post production site **110**, a major media distribution point **120**, an end user media distribution system **130**, a set top box (STB) **140**, and an information presenting device **156**. The end user media distribution system **130** may be located in a household, business, government facility, or other location where end users view and/or listen to the content. The set top box may **140** be any type of receiving device capable of receiving and converting media content signals such as, for example, a set top box, a satellite receiver, a cable converter box, a cable decoder box, a subscription television receiver, a terrestrial receiver, a personal video recorder, an internet protocol television receiver, or a video cassette recorder. The set top box **140** and information presentation device **156** may be separate or may be located within a single physical housing. The media distribution system **100** is monitored by an audience measurement system **153** that includes a metering device **154**, a communications network **158**, and a data collection server **162**. Persons of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the example of FIG. **1** is simplified in that multiple media distribution systems **110** and **120** and multiple end user media distribution systems **130** and STBs **140** (some or all of which may contain multiple information presenting devices **156**) will actually be present and monitored.

The post production site **110** is a system configured to edit and transmit primary content **112**. The post production site **110** includes an editing station **114** to edit primary content **112**, one or more local content insertion module(s) **115** to insert local media content into the primary content **112**, and a post production transmitter **116**.

The primary content **112** may be any form of media content such as recorded programs intended to be broadcast by, for example, a cable, satellite, and/or terrestrial television network, a VOD system, and/or a radio station. The primary content **112** may be, for example, a television situational comedy, a news show, a television drama, a cartoon, a web page, an advertisement, a commercial, an audio program, interactive content, a movie, etc. The primary content **112** may also be referred to as "traditional content" or "original content."

The editing station **114** may be any apparatus to edit and/or compile the primary content **112**. The editing station **114** may be used to perform any of a number of editing functions such as, for example, adjusting sound levels in the primary content **112**, adjusting video quality and/or other characteristics in the primary content **112**, removing or modifying segments of the primary content **112**, etc. The editing station **114** may also be configured to compile segments of the primary content **112**

(e.g., joining multiple segments of primary content **112**) and/or to associate a first segment of primary content **112** with a different segment of primary content **112** (e.g., associating a soundtrack with a video segment).

In the illustrated example, the post production transmitter **116** receives the primary content **112** from the editing station **114**, and transmits the primary content **112** and any inserted local content to one or more major media distribution point(s) **120**. The post production transmitter **116** is configured to transmit the output of the editing station **114** (possibly after adding local media content via local content insertion module(s) **115**) using any known transmission technique. For example, the data may be transmitted via a satellite connection, a wired connection (e.g., a network, a dedicated connection, the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), the Internet, etc.) and/or a wireless connection. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that the post production transmitter **116** may be implemented using any known apparatus and methods and, thus, is not described in further detail herein.

In the illustrated example, the local content insertion module(s) **115** are configured to insert, append, or otherwise attach local media content into the primary content **112** received by the editing station **114** and/or the post production transmitter **116**. In other words, the local content insertion module(s) **115** may be associated with either or both of the editing station **114** and the post production transmitter **116**. The local content insertion module(s) **115** may operate in accordance with a standard such as the DPI standard to splice and/or multiplex the local media content into the received primary content **112**. The local media content may be stored in the local content insertion module(s) **115** or in another device coupled to the local content insertion module(s) **115**. Methods to splice and/or multiplex local media content into the received primary content **112** are well known to persons of ordinary skill in the art and are not further described herein. The local content insertion module(s) **115** may be structured to insert specific segments or programs (e.g., local media content) into the received primary content **112** at specific locations or non-specified locations based on user instructions, or based on predetermined values (e.g., rules driven by received demographic information), etc. The local media content may be updated periodically by software, manually by a user, and/or downloaded.

In the illustrated example, the major media distribution point(s) **120** (e.g., a cable head-end and/or a television network or local affiliate) are configured to receive media content signals (e.g., the primary content **112**, possibly containing local media content added at the post production site **110**) from the post production site **110** and/or other sources of media content, and to distribute the media content signal to one or more viewer's home(s). The major media distribution point **120** of the illustrated example includes a major distribution point receiver **122**, one or more local content insertion module(s) **123**, and a major distribution point transmitter **124**.

The major distribution point receiver **122** is configured to receive the output of the post production site **110**. To this end, the major distribution point receiver **122** is configured to receive signals transmitted in the format employed by the post production transmitter **116**.

In the illustrated example, the local content insertion module(s) **123** are configured to insert local media content into the media content stream signal received by the major distribution point receiver **122** and/or into the signal received by the major distribution point transmitter **124**. In other words, the local content insertion module(s) **123** may be associated with either or both of the major distribution point receiver **122** and

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the major distribution point transmitter **124**. The local content insertion module(s) **123** are similar to the local content insertion module(s) **115** in the post production site **110**.

In the illustrated example, the major distribution point transmitter **124** is configured to distribute the received media content stream, possibly including additional inserted local content, to a plurality of end users. The major distribution point transmitter **124** is configured to transmit the media content stream signal using any known broadcast technique such as a digital and/or analog radio or television broadcast, whether it be a terrestrial broadcast, a satellite broadcast, a cable transmission, an Internet broadcast, a VOD system, etc. The major distribution point transmitter **124** may also be configured to convert the format of the received media content stream before the media content stream is transmitted. For example, the received media content stream may be in an analog format but may be converted to a compressed digital format such as MPEG before being transmitted. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that the major distribution point transmitter **124** may be implemented using apparatus and methods that are well known in the art and, thus, are not described in further detail herein.

The end user media distribution system **130** of the illustrated example is configured to receive the media content stream from the major media distribution point **120** and to transmit the received media content stream to one or more locations within a viewer's home (e.g., one or more rooms, information presenting devices, televisions, computers, and/or radios). The end user media distribution system **130** of the illustrated example includes an end user entry point **132**, one or more local content insertion module(s) **133**, and an end user distribution network **134**.

The end user entry point **132** of the illustrated example is configured to receive the media content stream (possibly containing content that was locally inserted at the post production site **110** and/or at the major media distribution point **120**) from the major media distribution point **120**. Thus, the end user entry point **132** may be configured to receive a digital and/or analog signal broadcast by a cable transmission system, a satellite broadcast system, a terrestrial broadcast system, the Internet, etc. The end user entry point **132** may be implemented using a terrestrial antenna, a satellite receiver dish, an analog and/or digital cable television input, a modem, etc.

The local content insertion module(s) **133** of the illustrated example are configured to splice, insert, append, and/or multiplex local media content into the media content stream received by the end user entry point **132** and/or into the media content signal received by the end user distribution network **134**. In other words, a local content insertion module(s) **133** may be associated with either or both of the end user entry point **132** and the end user distribution network **134**. The local content insertion module(s) **133** are similar to the local content insertion module(s) **115**.

As mentioned above, the media content stream received at the end user media distribution system **130**, is distributed to various locations in the consumer's household (e.g., to various information presenting devices **156** within the home) via the end user distribution network **134**. The end user distribution network **134** of the illustrated example may be implemented using wiring or wireless systems within the household to connect set top boxes (STBs) **140**, radios, low noise block downconverters (LNBs), data networks, computers, televisions, and/or other information presenting devices to the end user entry point **132**, and/or may be implemented using a local area network (LAN) and/or another computer network (which may be a wired and/or a wireless network). In

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addition, the end user distribution network **134** may also include devices, such as repeaters, to amplify the media content signal, if needed.

The STB **140** of the illustrated example receives the media content signal from the end user distribution network **134** and may be configured to process the media content stream so that it is presentable on the information presenting device **156**. The illustrated STB **140** receives an STB input signal **142** and includes a demodulator **144**, a conditional access unit **148** (e.g., a Point of Deployment (POD) module), a demultiplexer **146**, one or more local content insertion module(s) **149**, a storage device **150**, and a decoder **152**.

The demodulator **144** of the illustrated example is configured to receive the STB input signal **142** from the end user media distribution network **130** and to extract a viewer selected program from the STB input signal **142**. The STB input signal **142** may be a digital bit stream or data stream containing media content in a compressed digital format. For example, in a digital cable television or satellite television system, the demodulator **144** is configured to extract a program stream associated with a viewer selected program from the STB input signal **142**. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that methods to extract a program stream from an STB input signal **142** are well known. The extracted program stream(s) may contain a video stream, an audio stream, and/or a data stream. The video and/or audio stream may not be viewable and/or audible without first processing the extracted stream(s).

The demultiplexer **146** of the illustrated example is configured to separate the audio, video, and data of the program stream tuned by the demodulator **144**. The local content insertion module(s) **149** of the illustrated example are configured to splice, insert, append, and/or multiplex local media content into the media content stream received by the demultiplexer **146**, into the media content stream received by the conditional access unit **148**, and/or into the media content stream received by the decoder **152**. In other words, the local content insertion module(s) **149** may be associated with any or all of the demultiplexer **146**, the conditional access unit **148**, and the decoder **152**. The local content insertion module(s) **149** are similar to the local content insertion module(s) **115**.

The conditional access unit **148** of the illustrated example is configured to receive and, if needed, decrypt the audio, video, and data streams extracted by the demultiplexer **146**. The conditional access unit **148** of the illustrated example extracts keys from within the data stream and uses the keys and other locally stored data to decrypt the audio and/or video stream(s). A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that processes for extraction of keys from the data stream and decryption of the audio and/or video stream(s) are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. The decrypted audio and/or video stream(s) may not be in a format that is accessible by an information presenting device and may still be in a digital compressed format, such as MPEG. Streams in the compressed format will be decoded by decoder **152**. The audio and/or video data streams are output from the conditional access unit **148** to the storage device **150** and/or to the decoder **152**.

The storage device **150** of the illustrated example may be any device used to store digital and/or analog data. For example, the storage device **150** may be implemented by one or more hard drives, one or more compact disk (CD) drives, one or more digital versatile disk (DVD) drives, a random access memory (RAM) device, a non-volatile memory device (e.g., flash memory) and/or any other storage device. The storage device **150** may be configured to store the received media content stream and/or may be used to store local media

content that may be used by the local content insertion module(s) **149**. The storage device **150** can be broadband enabled and can receive local content through the Internet. For example, the storage device **150** may contain local content such as commercials, tutorial videos, special interest media content, etc. that may be inserted into the received media content stream by the local content insertion module(s) **149**. As with the other local media insertion modules of FIG. **1**, the local content may be randomly selected or may be selected based on a predetermined criterion, (e.g., based on the consumer's demographics, interests, previous selections/choices, etc.)

In the illustrated example, the decoder **152** receives the data, audio, and/or video streams from the demultiplexer **146** and/or the storage device **150**. The illustrated decoder **152** is configured to decode and/or decompress the data, audio and/or, video streams so that the audio and/or video content can be presented for consumption on the information presenting device **156** and/or on one or more other devices. The decoder **152** may decode and/or decompress the audio, video, and data streams so that the media content stream is in a usable format such as the National Television Systems Committee (NTSC) television signal format, the phase alternating line (PAL) television signal format, the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) format, Moving Picture Experts Group (MPEG) format, Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB) format, the Digital Visual Interface (DVI) format, the High Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) format, etc. The decoded media content stream is output to the metering device **154**, and/or to the information presenting device **156** and/or other display device(s).

As mentioned above, consumption of media distributed by the media content distribution system **100** is monitored by the audience measurement system **153**. The audience measurement system **153** includes one or more metering device(s) **154**. The illustrated metering device **154** is configured to receive the decoded media content stream output by the STB **140** to monitor the media content stream received by a monitored information presenting device **156** (e.g., a television, a radio, etc.). The metering device **154** may monitor various features and/or record various audience measurement data such as the tuning status of the information presenting device **156** (e.g., on/off status, channel tuned, etc.), program identification codes in one or more of the audio, video, and/or data streams, signatures (i.e., data which is characteristic of the tuned signal or its content) of one or more audio, video, and/or data streams, the identities or demographics of the audience members, etc. The exact logical or electrical location of the communications path from the metering device **154** to the information presenting device **156** will vary depending on the implementation.

The metering device **154** may be configured to generate audience measurement data using any known method(s) of monitoring a media content stream such as collecting watermark data, obtaining signature representation(s) of the received signal or content, and/or extracting ancillary codes embedded in the media content stream. Metering devices such as the metering device **154** are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art and will not be further described here.

The data collected by the metering device **154** is transmitted to a data collection server **162** via a network **158**. The network **158** may be any type of communications network, such as the Internet, a telephone network, a cable network, and/or a wireless network.

In the following, modifications to the known media distribution system **100** and to the known audience measurement system **153** of FIG. **1** to enable metering of locally inserted

content are described. In particular, tag encoder(s) are added to the distribution system **100** as shown in the examples of FIGS. **3-11** and a media monitoring device **160** is added to the audience measurement system **153**, which is hereby referred to as the audience measurement system **155** when the media monitoring device **160** is included, as shown in FIG. **1A** to detect and store identifying tags that have been embedded in the media data streams to identify locally inserted and/or primary content. An example media monitoring device **160** will be described in detail below.

FIG. **2** is a block diagram of an example tag encoder **200** to insert identification tags into a media content stream to uniquely identify each portion (e.g., second) and/or frame of content (primary and or locally inserted) contained in the media content stream. Preferably, the tag encoder **200** is structured to insert identification tags that identify one or more of: (a) the origin of a media segment (i.e., at what point in the media distribution process it was placed into the media stream), (b) the identity of the media segment, (c) the time and/or date at which the media segment was added to the media stream, etc. The example tag encoder **200** may be implemented as several hardware components each configured to perform one or more functions, may be implemented in software or firmware in which one or more programs are used to perform the different functions, or may be a combination of hardware, firmware, and/or software. The example tag encoder **200** is in communication with a remote communications source **202** and a local communications source **204** and includes a control system **206**, a Source Identifier (SID) module **208**, a tag injector **210**, a time stamper **212**, and an internal log **214**. A Source Identifier ("SID") may be a static number or symbol assigned to a specific media distribution point or a dynamic number or symbol as the application requires.

The remote communications source **202** and the local communications source **204** are configured to gather data to be associated with the media content stream. The data provided by the remote and/or local communications sources **202** and **204** might include an identifier for the media source (i.e., physical location, media production time/date, media topic, etc.), an identifier for the media broadcast method (i.e., cable signal, satellite signal, terrestrial signal, etc.), and/or an identifier for the media broadcast channel (i.e., broadcast station call letters). The data received by the remote and/or local communications sources **202** and **204** may additionally include log files (local content description/identification, when, and where local content has been inserted) generated by the local content insertion modules **115**, **123**, **133** and **149**. The log files may contain details regarding which sections of the primary content have been replaced with local content and/or the reasoning as to why the content was replaced. This data can be used to indicate that local content has been inserted and where that content was inserted. Data received from the remote communications source **202** and/or the local communications source **204** is provided to the control system **206** for processing. The local communications source **204** may be any source of data associated with the media content such as, for example, a local computer storing identification data, a person entering identification data, or any other source of identification data. The remote communications source **202** may be any type of data source that is not located at the same location as the example tag encoder **200**. For example, the remote communications source may any of the data sources example provided for the local communications source **204** provided that data sources are located at a remote location such as a data collection center.

The control system **206** is configured to process data received from the remote communications source **202** and/or the local communications source **204**. The remote and/or local communication sources **202** and **204** may transmit data that is related to media not currently being processed (i.e., media that will be broadcast in the future) and/or to media that is currently being processed. In order to eliminate extraneous data, the control system **206** determines whether the data received is relevant to the current media content stream. If the data is determined not to be relevant, it is ignored and/or stored for future use. If the data is determined to be relevant, the data is communicated to the SID module **208**.

The SID module **208** of the illustrated example is configured to provide the tag injector **210** with a SID to be associated with a media content stream. As used herein, a SID is a unique source identifier that may include one or more of several predetermined identifiers, which uniquely identify media content (e.g., a predetermined serial number, an International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN), an ISAN combined with a version identifier (known as Versioned (ISAN (V-ISAN))), a Moving Picture Experts Group (MPEG) Packet Identifier (PID), Industry Standard Coding Identification (ISC), Advertising Digital Identification (Ad-ID), house number, etc) and/or the source providing the media content. The SIDs may be pre-arranged with media content providers such that specific SIDs are associated with specific programs and/or commercials and/or with specific content providers. The SIDs stored in the SID module **208** may be updated and/or modified by software (e.g., by an automated download operation) and/or by a user update (i.e., manually).

The time stamper **212** of the illustrated example is configured to provide the tag injector **210** with current date and time information. The time stamper **212** may provide to the tag injector **210**: the date and/or time a media content stream is received at the example tag encoder **200**, the date and/or time that local content is injected into the media stream, and/or a time-in-creative, such as, for example, the time since the start of a given segment of content. A segment could be a commercial, program, chapter, program segment, or other desired section of content. The time-in-creative may be associated with the time the media content stream is broadcast (e.g., aired), the time the media content signal is created, and/or any other time of interest. The time stamper **212** may be queried by the tag injector **210** for the time and/or date information. The time stamper **212** may be similar to a real-time clock device and/or may be configured to store the date and/or time information as a number of seconds elapsed since a predetermined date. For example, the time stamper **212** may count the number of seconds elapsed since 12:00 AM, Jan. 1, 2000. Time stamper(s) **212** are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art and will not be further described herein.

The tag injector **210** of the illustrated example receives a media content stream and associates one or more identifying tags with the media content stream, the media content stream, and/or a program contained in the media content stream. The tag injector **210** is configured to receive data, via the control system **206**, from the remote and/or local communications sources **202** and **204** (e.g., log files generated by the local content insertion modules **115**, **123**, **133**, and **149** indicating local content description/identification, when, and where local content has been inserted), the SIDs and/or other identifying data from the SID module **208**, and/or date and/or time information from the time stamper **212** to create the identifying tags. Thus, as used herein, an "identifying tag" comprises a SID that may be combined with a time and/or date stamp. The identifying tags may be encrypted using any known encryption algorithm or may be un-encrypted. The tag

injector **210** may also be configured to update an internal log **214** with any content identification tag(s) that are injected into the content signal so that the meaning of each identifying tag is recorded.

Regardless of the data (i.e., time/date stamp, SID, etc) used in creating the identifying tag, the tag injector **210** of the illustrated example associates the identifying tag with the media content stream by embedding the identifying tag within the media content stream. The tag injector **210** may use any known method of embedding information within the media content. For example, the tag injector **210** may insert the identifying tag using techniques similar to techniques used to insert ancillary codes into media content stream (see U.S. Pat. No. 5,629,739, which is hereby incorporated by reference, for an example code insertion system) and/or techniques used to insert watermark data (see U.S. Pat. No. 6,061,793, which is hereby incorporated by reference, for an example watermarking system).

The internal log **214** is configured to store identifying tags created by the tag injector **210**. The internal log **214** may also store data that may be extracted from the media content stream, such as metadata. The internal log **214** may encrypt the identifying tag(s), compress the identifying tag(s), and/or sort the identifying tag(s) before and/or after inserting the identifying tag(s) into the internal log **214**. The internal log **214** may continuously, periodically and/or aperiodically be transmitted to a data collection server, such as the data collection server **162** of FIG. 1, using any known communication protocol such as Internet Protocol or Xmodem.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an example post production site **300** implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2. The post production site **300** may be substantially similar to the post production site **110** of FIG. 1. Thus, the post production site **300** includes an editing station **114**, one or more local content insertion module(s) **115**, and a post production transmitter **116** that may be identical to the primary content **112**, the editing station **114**, the local content insertion module(s) **115**, and the post production transmitter **116** of FIG. 1, respectively. However, in order to encode primary content **112** and/or any inserted local media content with identifying tags so that the primary content **112** and/or any inserted local media content can be identified at a later time, the post production site **300** also includes one or more tag encoders **200** and **200'**.

The tag encoders **200** and **200'** are used to associate one or more identifying tags with the primary content **112** and/or with any locally inserted content. In the illustrated example, the tag encoder **200** is configured to receive the primary content **112** from the editing station **114** and to attach identifying tags to the primary content **112** and/or to any local content inserted by the local content insertion module(s) **115**. The tag encoder **200'** is configured to associate one or more identifying tags with the primary content **112** and/or with any local content inserted, for example, by the editing station **114** or the post production transmitter **116**, immediately before or as the media signal is transmitted by the post production transmitter **116**. The identifying tags inserted by the tag encoder **200'** may be significantly similar to the identifying tags used by the tag encoder **200**. The post production site **300** may employ one or both of the tag encoders **200** and **200'**. The tag encoders **200** and **200'** may use a SID associated with the post production site **300**, a SID associated with the primary content **112**, a SID associated with inserted local media content, and/or any other SID as described above.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of an example major media distribution point **400** implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2. The major media distribution point **400** may be substantially similar to the major media distribution point **120**.

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Thus, the major media distribution point **400** includes a major distribution point receiver **122**, one or more local content insertion module(s) **123**, and a major distribution point transmitter **124** that may be identical to the major distribution point receiver **122**, the local content insertion module(s) **123**, and the major distribution point transmitter **124** of FIG. 1, respectively. In addition, the major media distribution point **400** of FIG. 4 includes one or more tag encoder(s) **200** and **200'**, which may be identical.

The tag encoders **200** and **200'** are configured to associate one or more identifying tags with the media content received by the major distribution point receiver **122**, the media content output by the major distribution point transmitter **124**, and/or any local media content that may be inserted by the local content insertion module(s) **123**. The tag encoders **200** and **200'** may use a SID associated with the major media distribution point **400**, a SID associated with the media content received by the tag encoders **200** and **200'**, a SID associated with the local media content inserted by the insertion module(s) **123** or any other SID as described above. For example, the tag encoders **200** and **200'** may use a SID associated with a television network, a local affiliate of the television network, and/or a cable television provider. The major media distribution point **400** does not need to use both of the tag encoders **200**, **200'**, but may instead employ only one of the two tag encoders **200** and **200'**.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of an end user media distribution system **500** implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2. In general, the end user media distribution system **500** is configured to receive media content, which may additionally contain local media content that has been inserted, associate one or more identifying tag(s) with the media content, insert local media content, and/or distribute the tagged media content to one or more locations and/or information presenting device(s) **156** at the end user's location. The end user media distribution system **500** of the illustrated example includes an end user entry point **132**, local content insertion module(s) **133**, and an end user distribution network **134** that are similar to the end user entry point **132**, the local content insertion module(s) **133**, and the end user distribution network **134** of FIG. 1, respectively. In addition, the illustrated end user media distribution system **500** includes two tag encoders **200** and **200'**.

The tag encoders **200** and **200'** are configured to associate one or more identifying tags with the media content received at the end user media distribution system **500** and/or with local media content inserted by the local content insertion module(s) **133**. The tag encoder **200** is configured to receive the media content stream, which may include local media content that has been inserted into the media content stream by any of the local content insertion module(s) **133**, from the end user entry point **132** and to associate one or more identifying tags with the media content. The tag encoder **200'** is configured to receive the media content stream, which may include local media content that has been inserted into the media stream by any of the local content insertion modules **133**, from the end user distribution network **134** and to associate one or more identifying tags with the media content. Although the example end user media distribution system **500** of FIG. 5 illustrates a system with two tag encoders **200** and **200'**, an example end user media distribution system **500** may be implemented using only one tag encoder (e.g., either the tag encoder **200** or the tag encoder **200'**).

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of an example STB **600** implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2. In general, the STB **600** is configured to receive a media content stream and to decrypt and/or decode the media content stream so that the media

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content is viewable on a television and/or display device. The STB **600** may also be implemented to insert local media content and/or to tag any portion of the media content stream. The example STB **600** includes a STB input **602**, a demodulator **144**, a demultiplexer **146**, local content insertion module(s) **149**, a conditional access unit **148**, a storage device **150** and a decoder **152** that are similar to the STB input **142**, the demodulator **144**, the demultiplexer **146**, the conditional access unit **148**, the local content insertion module(s) **149**, the storage device **150** and the decoder **152** of FIG. 1, respectively. In addition, the example STB **600** includes the tag encoders **200** and **200'**.

The tag encoder **200** is configured to receive decrypted audio, video, and/or data streams from the conditional access unit **148** and/or from the storage device **150** and to associate one or more identifying tags with the audio, video and/or data streams. The tag encoder **200'** is configured to receive the decoded and/or decompressed audio and video content from the decoder **152** and to attach identifying tags to the audio and/or video content. It is common but not required to decompress and/or decrypt content prior to applying or extracting tags. The audio, video, and/or data streams may include local content that is inserted into the data streams by the local content insertion module(s) **149**. Thus, the tags inserted by the tag encoder(s) **200** and **200'** may alternatively or additionally be associated with that locally inserted content. The example STB **600** does not need to include both of the tag encoder(s) **200** and **200'** and may instead include only one of the tag encoder(s) **200** or **200'**.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an example media monitoring device **160**, which may be incorporated into, coupled to, or otherwise associated with the metering device **154**, to detect and log identifying tags. The example media monitoring device **160** may be implemented as several hardware components, each configured to perform one or more functions, may be implemented in software or firmware in which one or more programs are used to perform the different functions, or may be a combination of hardware, firmware, and/or software. The media monitoring device **160** of FIG. 7 includes a tag detector **702**, a tag database **704**, an inherent data detector **706**, an inherent data database **708**, a signature module **710**, a transition detector **712**, and an analyzer **714**.

The tag detector **702** of the illustrated example is configured to receive media content tuned by a monitored information presenting device **156** and to detect identifying tags embedded in or otherwise associated with the media content by a tag injector such as, for example, the tag injector **210**. The identifying tags are, preferably, the identifying tags used by the tag encoders **200** of FIGS. 2-6. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that any method to detect identifying tags may be used, and that the employed method(s) will depend on the type of tags employed and/or the method of attaching or embedding the tags into the content stream. As an example, if the tags are comprised of a serial number in an encrypted format, the tag detector may monitor the content stream for such data. When data encrypted in the predetermined format is discovered, the data is decrypted using an appropriate decryption algorithm and the serial number is extracted.

The tag detector **702** may be configured to store the identifying tags in the tag database **704**. The contents of the tag database **704** are periodically or aperiodically transmitted to a data collection server such as the data collection server **162** of FIG. 1A for processing. The contents of the tag database **704** may be transmitted to the analyzer **714**, a metering device **154** (see FIG. 1A), a data collection server **162** (see FIG. 1A), and/or other local equipment when a sufficient number of

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identifying tags have been collected, at predetermined times, continuously, or at any other suitable time. Any communication protocol may be used to transmit the contents of the tag database 704 to the data collection server such as, for example, Internet Protocol or Xmodem.

The inherent data detector 706 of the illustrated example is configured to receive media content and to extract content identification data, which is inherent in the media content stream, other than the inserted tag data and signature data. The content identification data extracted by the inherent data detector 706 includes codes and/or data that may be inserted into the media content stream by the media content creators and may be intended to be used for purposes such as asset management. In other words, said content identification data is not originally intended for audience measurement purposes. Examples of such content identification data include ISAN, V-ISAN, a network house number, transport stream identifiers, etc.

The inherent data detector 706 is configured to store the extracted content identification data in the inherent data database 708. The contents of the inherent data database 708 may be transmitted to the analyzer 714, a metering device 154 (see FIG. 1A), to a data collection server 162 (see FIG. 1A), and/or to other local equipment for processing when a sufficient amount of content identification data has been collected, at predetermined times, continuously, or at any other desired time interval. Any communication protocol may be used to transmit the contents of the inherent data database 708 to the data collection server such as Internet Protocol or Xmodem.

The signature module 710 is configured to receive the media content stream and to generate signature information based on the audio content, the video content, and/or the transport stream of the media content. Signature information may be useful, for example, if no identification tags are found in the content stream. Time stamp information may also be associated with the signature. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that there are several known methods to generate or collect signatures and any of these methods may be used by the signature module 710 (see U.S. Pat. No. 5,612,729, which is hereby incorporated by reference, for an example of generating a signature from the media content stream). The signature module 710 may also be configured to capture segments of raw media content (e.g., raw audio content, raw video content, and/or raw digital data). The signature module 710 may store the segments of the raw media content and the generated signatures along with (e.g., in association with) time stamp information.

The signature module 710 is configured to transmit the extracted or collected signatures and/or the captured segments of raw media content to the analyzer 714, a metering device 154 (see FIG. 1A), to a data collection server 162 (see FIG. 1A), and/or to other local equipment.

The data processing server 162 is configured to receive the generated signatures and the captured media content, and to attempt to determine the identity of the media content received by the signature module 710. The data processing server 162 has access to a database (e.g., a signature database) of known signatures and the associated program information (e.g., title, owner, etc.). The generated signatures are compared to the database of known signatures to determine the identity of the media content received by the signature module 710. The data processing server 162 may also be configured to compare the captured segments of raw media content to a database containing known segments of raw media content and associated program information or metadata (e.g., a raw media content database).

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The signature database and the raw media content database may be updated using methods known to those of ordinary skill in the art. In addition, the signature database and the raw media content database may be updated to include entries for local content that may be inserted at a post production site 110, a major media distribution point 120, an end user media distribution system 130, and/or an STB 140. For example, a media monitoring device may be located near a point where local media content is inserted into a media content stream. The media monitoring device may recognize or identify the local media content that has been inserted into the media content stream by analyzing metadata associated with the inserted local media content. When inserted local media content has been detected, the media monitoring device may extract signatures using a signature module (e.g., the signature module 710). The extracted signatures and associated metadata identifying the media content represented by the signatures may then be transmitted to a data collection facility for addition to a signature database. The signature database may be compared with signatures extracted by another media monitoring device to identify media content received at the other media monitoring device. The locations of media monitoring devices will be described in further detail in conjunction with FIGS. 9-11.

The transition detector 712 of the illustrated example is configured to receive media content and to detect transitions between segments in the media content stream. The transition detector 712 may be configured to monitor the received media content stream and to detect packet identifiers (PIDs) associated with data streams in the media content. The transition detector 712 may also monitor a repetition rate and/or frequency associated with the PIDs. If the repetition rate changes, the transition detector 712 may indicate a change of programming has occurred and store information describing the change (e.g., the PID, the time, etc.). In addition, the absence of a PID and subsequent reappearance of a PID may also indicate a change of programming has occurred (e.g., insertion of a commercial). The transition detector 712 uses several methods for detection such as, changes in identifying tags, changes in content identification, changes in PIDs, etc. The transitions are useful in identifying the media content an audience is consuming.

The transition detector 712 may be configured to detect changes in the identifying tags and/or in the content identification data (e.g., content signatures and inherent identifying data) and to store the old and new values of the identifying tags and/or the old and new value of the content identification data. The time associated with the change of identifying tags and/or the change of the content identification data may also be recorded. A transition time (e.g., the time between receiving the old identifying tag value and receiving the new identifying tag value) is also stored and analyzed. The transition time is compared to a predetermined threshold to determine if a program transition occurred.

The transition detector 712 is also configured to detect changes in metadata that may be associated with the media content. For example, the transition detector 712 may analyze the metadata to determine changes in the metadata content (e.g., conditional access information, captioning data, parental guidance data, source data, etc.). Changes in the metadata content may indicate a program change. When a change is indicated by the change in the metadata, the date and/or time, and change in metadata content is recorded.

The transition detector 712 may also be configured to detect transitions in programs by monitoring a program map and/or a program association table associated with the received media content. The program map and/or the program

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association table are data tables that define the structure of the media content. Media content characteristics such as sound, picture and other metadata are included in the program map and/or the program association table. The transition detector 712 may determine when the media content characteristics in the program map and/or the program association table change and to determine, from these changes, that a program change has occurred. The transition 712 detector can also detect typical indications of media content splicing such as blank frames and/or quiet sections in the audio.

The transition detector 712 may also be configured to monitor software instructions used to control splicing and/or multiplexing of media content stream by local content insertion module(s) such as the local content insertion module(s) 115, 123, 133, 149 of FIGS. 1 and/or 1A. The transition detector 712 may alternatively or additionally detect data generated from software instructions used by the local content insertion module(s) 115 to splice and/or multiplex media content. The transition detector 712 may also be configured to detect changes within local content insertion module(s) 115 such as memory usage, CPU usage, input/output usage, and accesses to memory devices within the local content insertion module(s) 115. The transition detector 712 is configured to transmit the generated media content transition data to the analyzer 714.

The analyzer 714 is capable of receiving data from the inherent data database 708, the tag database 704, the signature module 710, and the transition detector 712. The analyzer 714 is further capable of analyzing the received data to identify locally inserted media content using data from one or more of the inherent data detector 708, the tag database 704, the signature module 710, and the transition detector 712. For example, the analyzer 714 may recognize a transition between programs using data from the transition detector 712 and may identify the program transitioned to using data from the tag database 704. The analyzer may transmit the results of the analysis to the metering device 154 (see FIG. 1A), to a data collection server 162 (see FIG. 1A), and/or to other local equipment. Alternatively, the analyzer 714 may transmit the results of the inherent data database 708, the tag database 704, the signature module 710, and the transition detector 712 to the metering device 154 (see FIG. 1A), to the data collection server 162 (see FIG. 1A), and/or to other local equipment. In an alternative implementation, the analyzer 714 may not be used and the components of the media monitoring device 160 may transmit data directly to the metering device 154 (see FIG. 1A), to the data collection server 162 (see FIG. 1A), and/or to other local equipment.

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of an example post production site 800 implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7. The example post production site 800 receives and processes primary content 112. To this end, it includes an editing station 114, local content insertion module(s) 115, a tag encoder 200, a post production transmitter 116, and a tag encoder 200' that are similar to the primary content 112, the editing station 114, the local content insertion module(s) 115, the tag encoder 200, a post production transmitter 116, and the tag encoder 200' of FIG. 3, respectively. In addition, the post production site 800 includes media monitoring devices 160 and 160'.

The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to detect identifying tags present in the content stream. In addition, the media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to generate signatures and to detect program transitions and/or changes as described above in conjunction with FIG. 7. The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to transmit the detected identifying tags, generated

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signatures, and/or detected program transition information to a metering device 154, to data collection server 162, or to other local equipment. Similar to the tag encoders 200 and 200' of FIG. 3, it is not necessary for the post production site 800 to include both media monitoring devices 160 and 160'. Instead, the post production site 800 may include either the media monitoring device 160 or the media monitoring device 160'.

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of an example major media distribution point 900 implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7. The major media distribution point 900 includes a major distribution point receiver 122, local content insertion module(s) 123, a tag encoder 200, a major distribution point transmitter 124, and a tag encoder 200' that are similar to the major distribution point receiver 122, local content insertion module(s) 123, the tag encoder 200, the major distribution point transmitter 124, and the tag encoder 200' of FIG. 4, respectively. The major media distribution point 900 also includes the media monitoring devices 160 and 160'.

The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to monitor identifying tags and/or content identification data associated with media content received by the major distribution point receiver 122 and transmitted by the major distribution point transmitter 124, respectively. The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are also configured to generate signatures and to detect program transitions in the media content stream. The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to transmit detected identifying data, the content identification data, the generated signatures, and/or the program transition information to a metering device 154, to a data collection server 162, or to other local equipment. Similar to the tag encoders 200 and 200' of FIG. 3, the example major media distribution point 900 may not include both media monitoring devices 160 and 160' as shown in FIG. 9. Instead, the major media distribution point 900 may include only one of the media monitoring devices 160 and 160'.

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of an example end user media distribution system 1000 implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7. The example end user media distribution system 1000 includes an end user entry point 132, local content insertion module(s) 133, a tag encoder 200, an end user distribution network 134, and a tag encoder 200' that are similar to the end user entry point 132, the local content insertion module(s) 133, a tag encoder 200, an end user distribution network 134, and a tag encoder 200' of FIG. 5, respectively. The example end user media distribution system 1000 also includes the media monitoring devices 160 and 160'.

The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to monitor identifying tags associated with media content received by the end user entry point 132. In addition, the media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to generate signatures and to detect program transitions in the media content stream. The media monitoring devices 160 and 160' are configured to transmit detected identifying tags, generated signatures, and/or program transition information to metering device 154, to a data collection server 162, or to other local equipment. Similar to the tag encoders 200 and 200' of FIG. 5, the end user media distribution system 1000 may not include both of the media monitoring devices 160 and 160' as shown in FIG. 10. Instead, the media distribution system 1000 may include only one of the media monitoring devices 160 and 160'.

FIG. 11 is a block diagram of an example STB 1100 implemented using the apparatus of FIG. 2 and FIG. 7. The example STB 1100 includes an STB input 1102, a demodulator 144, a

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conditional access unit **148**, a demultiplexer **146**, local content insertion module(s) **149**, a tag encoder **200**, a storage device **150**, a decoder **152**, and a tag encoder **200'** that are similar to a STB input **602**, the demodulator **144**, demultiplexer **146**, the conditional access unit **148**, the local content insertion module(s) **149**, the tag encoder **200**, the storage device **150**, the decoder **152**, and the tag encoder **200'** of FIG. **6**, respectively. In addition, the example STB **1100** includes media monitoring devices **160** and **160'**.

The media monitoring devices **160** and **160'** are configured to monitor the media content stream received from the demultiplexer **146**, the storage device **150**, and/or the decoder **152** for identifying data and/or content identification data. In addition, the media monitoring devices **160** and **160'** are configured to generate signatures based on the received media content and to detect program transitions and/or changes in the media content stream. The media monitoring devices **160** and **160'** are configured to transmit collected identifying tags, generated signatures, and/or program transition information to a metering device **154**, to a data collection server **162**, or to other local equipment. The example STB **1100** may be implemented using either the media monitoring device **160** or the media monitoring device **160'** or both.

FIGS. **12**, **13** and **14** are flowcharts representative of example machine readable instructions that may be executed by the apparatus of FIGS. **2** and/or **7** to identify the primary content and local media content in a tuned program stream. The example processes of FIGS. **12**, **13** and/or **14** may be implemented using one or more software programs that are stored in one or more memories (e.g., flash memory **1512** and/or hard disk **1520** of FIG. **15**) and executed by one or more processors (e.g., processor **1506** of FIG. **15**) in a well known manner. However, some or all of the blocks of the illustrated processes may be performed by firmware, by hardware, and/or manually. Although the processes are described with reference to the flowcharts illustrated in FIGS. **12**, **13** and **14**, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that many other methods of performing the processes may be used. For example, the order of many of the blocks may be altered, the operation of one or more blocks may be changed, blocks may be combined, blocks may be split, and/or blocks may be eliminated.

FIG. **12** is a flowchart representative of example machine readable instructions that may be executed to implement the tag encoder **200** of FIG. **2**. The example process begins when a media content stream is received by the tag injector **210** of FIG. **2** (block **1202**). The received media content stream may include local media content that is inserted prior to the tag injector **210** receiving it. The media content stream may be an analog signal (e.g., NTSC, PAL, etc.) or a digital signal containing bit streams and/or data streams.

The tag injector **210** receives a SID from the SID module **208** that is to be associated with the media content (block **1204**). The SID may be a random number, a predetermined number, a number associated with received local content, ISAN information, V-ISAN information, an MPEG PID, any combination of the foregoing, etc. The tag injector **210** also receives time and date information from the time stamper **212** (block **1206**). The time and date information may correspond, for example, to the time the media content stream is received.

The tag injector **210** uses the SID and the time and date information received in blocks **1204** and **1206** to form an identifying tag to be associated with the media content (block **1208**). The identifying tag is associated with the media content by, for example, inserting the identifying tag into the media content using techniques similar to techniques used to insert watermark data and/or to insert ancillary codes into a

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media content stream. Identifying tags may be associated with the media content so that, for example, each segment, second, and/or frame of content of the media content stream is tagged and, thus, identified. Of course, less comprehensive tagging may be appropriate for some content.

After the identifying tag has been created and injected into the media content (block **1208**), the tag injector **210** updates the internal log **214** (block **1210**). The tag injector **210** stores the identifying tag (e.g., the SID and/or the date and time information used to create the identifying tag) in the internal log **214**. The tag injector **210** may also store data extracted from the media content such as metadata information.

FIG. **13** is a flowchart representative of example machine readable instructions which may be executed to implement the monitoring device **160** of FIG. **7**. The example process begins when the monitoring device **160** receives a media content stream (block **1302**). The tag detector **702** analyzes the media content stream and determines if any identifying tags are associated with the media content (block **1304**). If the tag detector **702** determines there are no identifying tags associated with the media content (block **1304**), control advances to block **1308**. If the tag detector **702** determines there are identifying tags associated with the media content (block **1304**), the tag detector **702** stores the identifying tags in the tag database **704** (block **1306**).

The signature module **710** also receives the media content stream and generates signatures based on the audio content, video content, and/or transport streams (block **1308**). In the example of FIG. **13**, the signature module **710** also captures segments of raw data from the audio content, the video content, and/or the transport streams (block **1308**). The generated signatures and/or segments of raw data are stored in the inherent data database **708** and transmitted at a later time, as described below.

Persons of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that the position of blocks **1306** and **1308** may be reversed in FIG. **13** such that signature data is only collected if a tag is not detected.

The inherent data detector **706** then analyzes the media content stream and extracts any inherent identification data (e.g., data embedded in the signal that is not originally intended for audience measurement purposes) that may be embedded in the media content stream (block **1310**). The extracted identification data is then stored in the inherent data database **708**. After the inherent data detector **706** extracts the content identification data and stores the data in the inherent data database **708**, the transition detector **712** analyzes the media content stream to identify a program transition and/or change (block **1312**).

An example process **1400** to detect transitions is illustrated in FIG. **14**. The example process **1400** begins when the transition detector **712** determines if there is a change in the values of the identification tags, the content identification data, API behavior, and/or metadata associated with the received media content stream (block **1402**). The transition detector **712** may analyze the most recently captured identification tags, inherent data, and/or metadata and compare the values to values previously captured to determine if a change has occurred. If the transition detector **712** determines a change occurred (block **1402**), the transition detector **712** stores the previous values, the most recently captured values, and the time associated with the change (block **1404**).

The transition detector **712** then extracts PIDs from the media content stream and analyzes the PIDs to determine if a change in PID values has occurred (block **1406**). If a change in PIDs is detected (block **1406**), the previous PID, the current PID, and the time associated with the change is stored (block

1408). The transition detector 712 also detects the repetition rate of the PIDs and determines if the repetition rate and/or frequency of the PIDs changed (block 1410). The transition detector 712 may detect changes in the repetition rate by comparing a time difference between two PIDs and determining if the time difference is different than a predetermined threshold (e.g., a time difference). If the transition detector 712 determines a change in the repetition rate and/or frequency of the PIDs occurred (block 1410), the transition detector 712 stores the time associated with the change and the change in repetition rate (block 1412).

The transition detector 712 then analyzes the program map and/or the program association table and/or other logical structures associated with the media content stream to determine if a change occurred in the program map and/or the program association table (block 1414). The transition detector 712 may analyze the media content characteristics contained in the program map and/or the program association table and/or other logical structures to determine if any of the audio and/or video content has changed. If a change in the program map and/or the program association table is detected (block 1414), the transition detector 712 stores the time associated with the change and the program map and/or program identification tables (block 1416).

The transition detector 712 then performs integrity checks on the data (e.g., CRC, Checksum, etc.) to determine if errors are present (block 1418). The detector 712 also looks for a change in the level of errors present (e.g., a jump in the number of errors from 0 to 20). If a change in the presence of errors occurs (block 1418), the transition detector 712 records the information and time associated with the errors (block 1420). Control then returns to block 1313 of FIG. 13.

In addition to determining if a program change and/or transition has occurred (block 1312), the transition detector 712 monitors software instructions that may be used by local content insertion module(s) 115, 123, 133, and 149 to splice and/or multiplex local media content into the received media content stream (block 1313). The transition detector 712 may monitor the software instructions using available application programming interfaces (APIs) and analyze data that may be produced from the software instructions (e.g., return values from a software function). The transition detector may use a secondary API to monitor the splicing/multiplexing API for behavior changes that may indicate that a program transition has occurred. In addition, the transition detector 712 may also monitor the local content insertion module(s) CPU usage, accesses to a memory device, input/output usage, etc.

After the transition detector 712 monitors the local content insertion module(s)' software instructions (block 1313), the tag detector determines whether it is time to export the collected data (block 1314). If not, control returns to block 1302. If so, the data collected by the tag detector 702, the inherent data detector 706, the signature module 710 and the transition detector 712 is transmitted to a data collection server 162 (block 1316). The collected data may be transmitted using any communication protocol such as Internet Protocol or Xmodem. After or while the collected data is exported, control returns to block 1302 to continue the monitoring process.

FIG. 15 is a block diagram of an example computer system that may be used to implement the disclosed apparatus. The computer system 1500 may be a personal computer (PC) or any other computing device. In the illustrated example, the computer system 1500 includes a main processing unit 1502 powered by a power supply 1504. The main processing unit 1502 may include a processor 1506 electrically coupled by a system interconnect 1508 to a main memory device 1510, a flash memory device 1512, and one or more interface

circuit(s) 1514. In the illustrated example, the system interconnect 1508 is an address/data bus. Of course, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that interconnects other than busses may be used to connect the processor 1506 to the other devices 1510-1514. For example, one or more dedicated lines and/or a crossbar may be used to connect the processor 1506 to the other devices 1510-1514.

The processor 1506 may be any type of well known processor, such as a processor from the Intel Pentium® family of microprocessors, the Intel Itanium® family of microprocessors, the Intel Centrino® family of microprocessors, and/or the Intel XScale® family of microprocessors.

The interface circuit(s) 1514 may be implemented using any type of well known interface standard, such as an Ethernet interface and/or a Universal Serial Bus (USB) interface. One or more input devices 1516 may be connected to the interface circuit(s) 1514 for entering data and commands into the main processing unit 1502. For example, an input device 1516 may be a keyboard, mouse, touch screen, track pad, track ball, isopoint, a VTR deck, a digital media server, and/or a voice recognition system.

One or more displays, printers, speakers, and/or other output devices 1518 may also be connected to the main processing unit 1502 via one or more of the interface circuit(s) 1514. The display 1518 may be a cathode ray tube (CRT), a liquid crystal displays (LCD), or any other type of display. The display 1518 may generate visual indications of data generated during operation of the main processing unit 1502. The visual indications may include prompts for human operator input, calculated values, detected data, etc.

The computer system 1500 may also include one or more storage devices 1520. For example, the computer system 1500 may include one or more compact disk drives (CD), digital versatile disk drives (DVD), and/or other computer media input/output (I/O) devices.

The computer system 1500 may also exchange data with other devices 1522 via a connection to a network 1524. The network connection may be any type of network connection, such as an Ethernet connection, digital subscriber line (DSL), telephone line, coaxial cable, etc. The network 1524 may be any type of network, such as the Internet, a telephone network, a cable network, and/or a wireless network. The network devices 1522 may be any type of network devices 1522. For example, the network device 1522 may be a client, a server, a hard drive, etc.

Although the above discloses example systems, including software or firmware executed on hardware, it is understood that such systems are merely illustrative and are not to be considered as limiting. For example, it is contemplated that any or all of these hardware and software components could be embodied exclusively in hardware, exclusively in software, exclusively in firmware or in some combination of hardware, firmware, and/or software. In other words, although certain methods, apparatus, and articles of manufacture have been described herein, the scope of coverage of this patent is not limited thereto. On the contrary, this patent covers all apparatus, methods, and articles of manufacture fairly falling within the scope of the appended claims either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for identifying locally inserted media, the method comprising:
 - monitoring a primary media signal at a consumer location, the primary media signal carrying at least one of audio or video;
 - after local media has been spliced into the primary media signal, by a first device at the consumer location to

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generate a modified media signal, analyzing the modified media signal at a second device at the consumer location to detect insertion of the local media into the modified media signal, the local media carrying at least audio or video to be presented by a media presentation device at the consumer location, wherein the first device is separate from the second device; and

responsive to detecting that the local media has been spliced into the primary media signal, transforming the modified media signal into a tagged signal by inserting identification data, identifying the local media, into the modified media signal after the local media has been inserted into the primary media signal, the identification data indicating that the local media was spliced into the primary media signal after the primary media signal was received at the consumer location.

2. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the identification data comprises a source identifier that is received from a source identifier module.

3. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the identification data comprises at least one of a time stamp, a date, an International Standard Audiovisual Number, a Versioned International Standard Audiovisual Number, a Movie Picture Experts Group Packet Identifier, an Industry Standard Coding Identification, an Advertising Digital Identification, a house number, or an industry identifier.

4. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the identification data comprises a serial number.

5. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the identification data is encrypted before insertion in the modified media signal.

6. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein inserting the identification data is performed at at least one of an entry to the consumer location, an entry to a set-top box associated with the consumer location, an output of a decoder in the set-top box, an output of the set-top box, an entry to a storage unit in the set-top box, or an output of a storage unit in the set-top box.

7. A method as defined in claim 6, wherein inserting the identification data is performed at an output of a conditional access unit in the set-top box.

8. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the identification data is inserted in a frequency range shared with a frequency range of the modified media signal.

9. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein inserting the identification is performed by an insertion circuit.

10. A method as defined in claim 9, wherein the insertion circuit comprises a processor executing instructions that cause the processor to insert the identification data.

11. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the local media is stored at the consumer location prior to the primary media signal being received at the consumer location from a media provider.

12. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the local media spliced into the primary media is selected from a plurality of available local media based on at least one of demographics of an audience at the consumer location, interests of the audience at the consumer location, or media previously presented at the consumer location.

13. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the identification data inserted into the modified media signal identifies the local media.

14. A method of identifying locally inserted media, comprising:

after a portion of locally inserted media has been spliced into a primary media signal by a first device at a consumer location to generate a modified media signal,

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analyzing the modified media signal at a second device at the consumer location to determine that a portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media, the locally inserted media comprising at least one of audio or video to be presented by a media presentation device at the consumer location, wherein the first device is separate from the second device; and

based on the determination that the locally inserted media was spliced into the primary media signal, inserting a tag in the modified media signal indicating that the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media that was spliced into the primary media signal after the primary media signal was broadcast.

15. A method as defined in claim 14, further comprising storing an indication that the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media in an audience measurement record.

16. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media comprises detecting a format change associated with the modified media signal.

17. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media comprises:

detecting a first attribute associated with the modified media signal at a first time;

detecting a second attribute associated with the modified media signal at a second time after the first time;

detecting the first attribute associated with the modified media signal at a third time after the second time;

determining a transition time associated with the length of time between the first time and the third time; and

comparing the transition time to a threshold value to determine whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media.

18. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media comprises identifying a change in at least one of a program map or a program association table.

19. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media is performed at at least one of an entry to the consumer location, an output of an end user distribution network, or an output of a decoder of a consumer receiving device.

20. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media is performed at an output of a conditional access unit of a consumer receiving device.

21. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media comprises identifying a transition present in the modified media signal.

22. A method as defined in claim 21, wherein identifying the transition present in the modified media signal comprises identifying a difference between a frequency of errors associated with the portion of the modified media signal and a frequency of errors associated with a different portion of the media signal.

23. A method as defined in claim 21, wherein identifying transitions present in the modified media signal comprises at least one of identifying a change in identification data inserted in the modified media signal, identifying a presence or absence of a media packet identifier in the modified media signal, identifying a change in the repetition rate of the media packet identifier in the modified media signal, identifying a change in a mapping of components in the modified media

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signal, identifying a change in metadata associated with the modified media signal, identifying a presence or absence of errors associated with the modified media signal, or identifying a change in a state of a set-top box.

24. A method as defined in claim 23, wherein the identification data inserted into the modified media signal is at least one of a tag inserted to meter media or identification data inserted to facilitate distribution of the locally inserted media to a consumer location.

25. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media comprises extracting identification data inserted into the modified media signal and recognizing a transition between at least two segments of the modified media signal.

26. A method as defined in claim 14, further comprising receiving the modified media signal at at least one of a set top box, a satellite receiver, a cable converter box, a cable decoder box, a subscription television receiver, a terrestrial receiver, a personal video recorder, an internet protocol television receiver, or a video cassette recorder/player.

27. A method as defined in claim 14, further comprising: receiving metadata associated with the portion of the modified media signal;

extracting a signature from the portion of the modified media signal;

transmitting the extracted signature and the received metadata to a remote location; and

storing the signature and the received metadata at the remote location.

28. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein determining whether or not the portion of the modified media signal is locally inserted media comprises at least one of extracting identification data inserted into the modified media signal, or extracting a signature of the portion of the modified media signal.

29. An apparatus for identifying locally inserted media, the apparatus comprising:

a tag detector to monitor a modified media signal at a consumer location, the modified media signal generated at a first device and, comprising local media spliced into

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a primary media signal, the modified media signal carrying at least one of audio or video, the tag detector to detect an identification tag associated with the modified media signal;

at least one of an inherent data detector to detect inherent data associated with the modified media signal or a transition detector to detect a transition between at least two segments of the modified media signal; and

an analyzer to indicate that a segment of the modified media signal is local media when at least one of the tag detector, the inherent data detector, or the transition detector indicates that the segment is local media that has been spliced into the primary media signal, the local media carrying at least audio or video to be presented by a media presentation device at the consumer location, the at least one of the tag detector, the inherent data detector, or the transition detector to operate on the modified media signal after the local media has been spliced into the primary media signal at the consumer location, wherein the apparatus is separate from the first device.

30. An apparatus as defined in claim 29, wherein the inherent data detector is to extract inherent data associated with the modified media signal.

31. An apparatus as defined in claim 30, further comprising an inherent data database to store inherent data extracted by the inherent data detector.

32. An apparatus as defined in claim 29, wherein the tag detector is to extract an identification tag associated with the modified media signal.

33. An apparatus as defined in claim 30, further comprising a tag database to store identification tags extracted by the tag detector.

34. An apparatus as defined in claim 29, further comprising a signature module to extract a signature from the modified media signal.

35. An apparatus as defined in claim 29, wherein the apparatus comprises both the inherent data detector and the transition detector.

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